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FROM ISAAC ROSENFELD'S JOURNALS

Introduction

In the 1940s, when *Partisan Review* specialized in promising careers, few gave more promise at the outset than Isaac Rosenfeld's. Though he eventually made his mark largely as a critic and reviewer, his ambition was always to be a major novelist, and he made an auspicious debut in fiction in *Partisan*'s winter 1944 issue with "The Hand that Fed Me," a story of a young man's stymied yearnings and fantastic illusions. The following year he would win the magazine's Novelette Award with "The Colony," a chapter from the "Indian" novel he never completed, but there already some of the demons that were to plague his writing were in evidence: abstraction, "analysitis," and, as one witness has put it, "a grand operatic mask" through which his voice "strained into grandiloquence." It was in large measure a difficulty in discovering his natural voice that bedevilled and finally defeated him, as he would note in his journal with bitter self-reproach: "I sit down at the typewriter. Whom shall I imitate today?"

But "The Hand that Fed Me" was a mature performance for so young a writer (Rosenfeld was twenty-six), remarkable for its apparent ease and spontaneity and the way it captured the self-defeating tactics of the spurned lover. It was also an early disclosure of Rosenfeld's personal leitmotifs: the anguish of love, the inevitability of humiliation, the lure of the emotional underground. As an imitation of Dostoevskian self-mortification, it bore obvious resemblances to Saul Bellow's *Dangling Man,* a portion of which had also appeared in *Partisan* just a short while before and would be published as a novel that very year. Indeed, Rosenfeld and Bellow were known in New York as the Chicago Dostoevskians for the somber and "Russian" mood they sought to capture in their early writing and for their heroes, inhabiting imaginary Saint Petersburgs and acting out mute and desperate yearnings in their searches for redemption through self-abasement. "My patron saint," Rosenfeld announced in his journal, "is Dostoevsky's Underground Man," and added, "I hold the conviction—it amounts to something of a theory—that embarrassment represents the

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true state of affairs, & the sooner we strike shame, the sooner we draw blood." How characteristic it was of that postwar moment of paralysis when to be neurotic and "alienated" was to imagine oneself a living representation of the modern condition is suggested by William Barrett's recollection of Delmore Schwartz reading and rereading *The Brothers Karamazov* and crying out at the memory of some outrageous act of his own: "What a scoundrel I am!"

Rosenfeld's story describes a young man's efforts to strike shame in his relations with a woman through a series of intimate and contradictory letters, though he has met her only once, three years earlier while signing up for the WPA. Of course, she disdains to answer his appeals, which are drenched in neurotic fantasy, but her silence only excites his efforts to achieve that total embarrassment that is the true state of affairs. Though not so extended a performance as Bellow's novel, this portrait of the alienated intellectual whose very estrangement is his passport to moral ascendancy is memorable for the vividness of its feelings and its contained recklessness, the nervous intimation that anything can happen next.

Though Rosenfeld would later write a number of brilliant stories, his early promise was never fulfilled. Much of his subsequent writing lacks the immediacy of "The Hand that Fed Me"; it is largely abstract and allegorical, owing more to Kafka than to Dostoevsky, and conscious of making a major statement. In the end, Rosenfeld published just a single novel, his tale of painful adolescence, *Passage From Home.* A subsequent novel, *The Enemy,* was to prove unpublishable, and the "Indian" novel, *The Empire,* was abandoned after years of work. He contemplated at least two other novels, set respectively in Russia and Greenwich Village, though, so far as I know, neither was carried out beyond the stage of notes. As the 1940s drew to a close, it became plain to Rosenfeld that his talent was inexplicably frozen, and that if he were to continue to write, he would first have to free it up, to restore its flow. His contact with Wilhelm Reich's theories of the sexual, later, "orgonomic," basis of the life processes convinced him that his writer's block was a token of some more basic, sexual, inhibition, and he spent much of the late forties locked in a protracted guerilla warfare with his own emotions.

At a certain point Rosenfeld broke contact with the nexus of modernist literature and postrevolutionary politics that prevailed at *Partisan Review* and moved away, not only from the centers of New York intellectual life, but New York itself, going to the University of Minnesota to teach for three years and then, finally, to the University of

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Chicago. As Barrett recalls, Philip Rahv had come to feel that Rosenfeld was no longer a "winner," and had withdrawn from him the support he so badly needed. But the inner necessities of Rosenfeld's turmoil, in which his passion was pitted against his irony and deeply ingrained habits of caution, were drawing him out of the *Partisan* orbit, as his devotion to the politics of instinct left no room for formulations about politics or culture or history that did not drive right to the sexual heart of the issue.

Yet, the style in which Rosenfeld took up Reich after the still moment of Dostoevskian depression reflected the suppressed revolutionism of his youth. As a teenager in Chicago, emerging from the supercharged environment of freethinking Russian Jews who were saturated with rebellion and socialism and for whom the Russian Revolution was the great watershed of European history and Western politics, Rosenfeld had been active in the Trotskyist movement through the Spartacus Youth League and the Young People's Socialist League during its Trotskyist phase, when it was known as "YPSL Fourth," after the Fourth International. It is difficult in retrospect to imagine Rosenfeld having much of anything to do with politics, and it is probably the case that his teenage Trotskyism was less a matter of doctrine than of atmosphere, of being born a Jew in a certain place at a certain moment in history. Be that as it may, I believe there was a part of him that was always devoutly revolutionary, and that his Marxism, such as it was, was a phase to be passed through on the way to a revolutionism that more suited his nature and for which Reich's promise of redemption through orgasm supplied the program. In Reich's sexual millenarianism one can see something of the Trotskyist mentality stripped of its political and historical points of reference. Like Revolutionary Marxism, Reichianism was an ideology of liberation with uncompromising values, a world integrative view of reality that armed its adherents with basic interpretations, and rigid internal dialectics that point the way to freedom only by submission to a stern agenda of treatment. It was, then, both a dogma and a discipline, and Rosenfeld's journals give a full and disheartening picture of how the feverish pursuit of openness and spontaneity could develop its own mechanism and rigidity, until the recoil against routine became itself a routine. Of course, Rosenfeld maintained a high degree of skepticism about Reich's more metaphysical doctrines, especially as they became more reliant upon the "orgone," the cosmic unit of biological potency that became, after the war, the mana of the system, but he held fast to the early ideas about the redemptive power of unblocked libido,

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though, after a lifetime of training in inhibition, his championship of sensuality was largely a matter of precept.

The journals, which Rosenfeld kept fitfully from 1941 until his death in 1956, were both workbooks for his fiction and diaries in which he monitored, with meticulous care, the turbulent ebb and flow of his emotions. The greater part of them cover the years before 1950, when he was trying to secure his reputation with a second novel and synthesize a way of life in the unexplored margins between the Bohemia he found increasingly unsubstantial and the middle-class that repelled him. What comes across most poignantly in them is the high cost of the struggle to gain clarity, both in living and writing, as his experiences and work continued to disappoint him. "*The Enemy* bores me," he complained typically. "How I've ruined it with this stuff [i.e., the psychoanalytic allegorizing], I want in Pathfinder a person, not a case-history. A *character,* by God!" The plague was everywhere, and he studied himself, as he did others, with the cold eye of the moral clinician, sparing nobody the grim diagnosis. He would observe of himself, during a stay at Black Mountain College in 1948, "I'm at the point here of no longer being able to regard any student's thought or expression of opinion as something in its own right, but as a trait of character, merely an ironic datum. The whole place, a page for my notebook." Bellow, always the reliable witness, would later recall in his forward to Theodore Solotaroff's collection of Rosenfeld's essays, *An Age of Enormity,* "There had been a quality in him in earlier days, described by one of his friends as 'hardheaded *Gemütlichkeit.*' For eight or ten years his mood was anything but *gemütlich.* He judged people harshly, he was no less harsh with himself."

Most of the character portraits and anecdotes in these journals, I imagine, were intended for the Village novel, which would have been a *roman à clef* after the manner of two of his best later stories, "George" and "Wolfie," both of which are collected in the posthumous volume, *Alpha and Omega.* Unlike the intervening allegories, the Village book was to be a return to what Rosenfeld had done so well at the outset, a fiction of direct impressions, sensuous, personal, and filled with the pathos of unused emotion. And, like everything else he wrote, it would be plotted along the curve of his apocalyptic imagination. For its climactic scene he imagined a Passover seder for Jewish Bohemians who can't read the Haggadah and would rather smoke marijuana and have a regular Village party. The seder quickly degenerates into a party and then a brawl and finally a sexual pairing off, as even the host leaves with another woman. Upon his early morning return, his wife quietly determines to call an end to the marriage.

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In publishing these excerpts from Rosenfeld's private journals, which his family has generously allowed me to see and quote from, it is not my purpose to reconstruct unwritten books or to resurrect another generation's gossip, but to bring to focus the image of a life carried out with all the passion, deliberateness, and integrity a man could muster. Rosenfeld knew that life is largely sleepwalking, and he refused to remain asleep. Of course, this desire to awaken was also a desire to break loose from his powerful inner contradictions, a native passionateness hedged by powerful and, as he saw it, "Jewish" reservations, and his irreconcilable yearnings toward health *and* illness: health as a condition of unobstructed emotional freedom and illness as a valorization of the underground, the only refuge of honor for a spiritual radical at a time when mental health had become synonymous with composure. "In my time," Rosenfeld wrote in his last journal in 1956, "the young looked upon life as an adventure. Today, they regard it as an investment." Within weeks, maybe days, of writing this, he died of a heart attack at the age of thirty-eight. He did not live to see his cherished ideal of living at full pitch gain broad acceptance in the next decade, when his underground became a transcontinental highway and the adventure of living the rallying cry of a generation.

MARK SHECHNER

Today went by N.Y.U. Went into the cafeteria, got tray, silver & napkin & was about to order when I found myself unable to order. I went out in the rain, to Alex's where I feel I now belong. But if I have put academics for all time behind me, why do I sneak back?

Really wanted to go up to philosophy office & talk to Hook. Why? To prove what? To show I'm right, better off? Thought of Burnham and ducked, not wanting to run into him. Still feel I've been a big disappointment to them all. Imagined conversation:

B: "I liked your story."

I: "I wish I could say the same for your piece."*

B: (Mutters something, smiles shyly, his face red).

---

*Rosenfeld's prize-winning story, "The Colony," and James Burnham's reassessment of Stalin, "Lenin's Heir," appeared together in the winter 1945 issue of *Partisan Review*. Burnham's article puts forth the thesis that Stalin can no longer be viewed as the betrayer of the deepest principles of the Bolshevik Revolution but their fulfillment.

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I: "The argument was a bad one. But no opinion of mine would matter now. You've heard all the reactions . . . ." Feeling of great discomfort & I stop.

"It's the biggest show on earth," said Eliot Cohen.* This statement came out of the left corner of his mouth, as did all other such pronunciamentos. It made me think, however, that when he was not speaking in his official capacity, but just for himself, then, perhaps, he spoke straight out of his mouth, and that when he was particularly intimate with you, he might even speak out of the other corner.

The difference between the existentialists and Camus on the one hand & Kafka on the other is that when the former reduce the self to absolute terms, it is bare, stripped clean, in a sort of sterile poverty. The reduction in Kafka is a kind of enrichening; the liaison with God commences when we are alone.

We are the abstract people, our essence is our God. The Christians have Christ, we have dignity. For them there is man, for us there is Holiness. A race of philosophers, obviously, for who else would prefer truth to personality, abstract grandeur to simple emotion? We have had to pay dearly for our better philosophical position. But give it up—never! We have no need of Christ, for each of us is his own Christ. Our suffering on behalf of our faith is the concrete stem, certainly strong enough, that upholds our great abstract flower. Suffering, our own suffering, not that of a half-god, is the personality of our faith.

Oh, the Jews who have to go elsewhere to acquire personality!

The Man who was Twice Arrested. E.V.D. Haag. Picked up on charges of homosexual vagrancy—& on suspicion of murder. Patently false, of course. But these are the "crimes" of which he is symbolically guilty.

Perhaps the damned are the saved. Myself last night at Connie's, ready to scream with self-consciousness. The misery of not being able to approach people, girls, not being able to do anything but smirk. Or

---

*Editor of *Commentary*, 1945–1959.

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that time with Tashka, the anguish at the thought that I might be expected to make a pass at her. How I've retrogressed! Yet what of it?—if it's true; and perhaps it's not true. Perhaps this is the normal, the right, by God. I would not mind some of this for myself, yet it's got to be good, what I really want. I want to feel impelled, not lured; a cardiac not a cerebral excitement.

"Kicks." A sociology of the spirit. (Be it understood—not of classes, not even of men, for that is for fiction, straight; but of souls.) God we are an unhappy lot. The whole sexual mystery of the Village is that with so much freedom, so much opportunity, so much experiment—still, no result. Promiscuity—the beginning of the experiment all over again, each time the same. Surely, in so many cases, one success? And if one succeeded, wouldn't his chain of experiments come to an end? Can it really be that none of this effort is rewarded with orgasm? One thing is clear: we live only for ecstasy. "Kicks" it is called, as if God were called "Hey-you!"—to hide from other's eyes the shame of this great passion, the shame of our coldness. No one, I am sure, has as yet felt the kick, the wallop, the horse's hoof. There would be the bruise of peace to show for it. The black-and-blue peace, the yellowing, purpling, swelling flesh, puffed with peace. Why not? I have suffered, & this is my reward. (Perhaps Herb has it.)

There are types in the Village whose lives are a quest, though they have no object. Van Den Haag, Hilbert Schwartz.* They can only be thought of as investigators, inspectors, spies, owing their allegiance to an Institute. At the end of their last report—a prayer, for mercy, salvation, begging that they and their fellows be spared, & at the same time offering themselves as hostages. Dostoevskian ghosts who never got into the novels.

Perhaps, as Manny# says, people don't want to live with each other.

Heard Shachtman debate Liston Oak & was ashamed of myself that I should ever have owed any allegiance—even if it was only of a formal kind—to that man. I was nauseated, infuriated by his manner.

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*Ernest Van Den Haag. Hilbert Schwartz was a Village character and a friend of Rosenfeld's. He is most probably the main character in a late story of Rosenfeld's entitled "George."

#Manny Farber.

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Sat in about the fifth row, near enough for his voice to hurt my ears & his gestures to exhaust me. He spoke as if he were wearing boots—strutted, sneered, screamed, drove his fist, made fun of poor Oak, held the audience in the palm of his hand, made them laugh at will, dead-panning his jokes with true insincerity. And all the while he raged & shouted, what was it he was saying? An old, dead piece, spoken, how many times?—that the Social Democrats are the betrayers (Oak's mistake for identifying himself with them) and not a thought for the topic—Does Stalinism flow from Bolshevism? There he rather gave himself away in his contempt for "Capitalist Democracy" & his praise of "Bolshevik dynamism." But his manner, his personality, was the most effective self-refutation. The screaming, the gestures of pain—who was it, not so long ago, who made the world shudder at his agony? Hitler—the suffering leader, hysterical martyr. The Greeks thought hysteria was a disease of the vagina, & they were not far wrong. Shachtman's was a sexual exhibition, female in its fury & in its need to overcome & devour the opponent.

Few Trotskyites have attained the eminence of having heard the "Old Man" speak. Those who have—& Shachtman is among them—are fixed up for life. The pattern: heroism, martyrdom, fury, irony, contempt, idealism by decibels & Marxist-Leninist fidelity by [unintelligible]. Each has taken from the "Old Man"—with here & there a relic, copied from pictures, newsreels & biographies, of the transmogrified Lenin—all that he can assimilate to his own personality.

There is something curiously bourgeois—and like all bourgeois sadists—innocent-seeming about Shachtman. He is short & inclines to be plump & flabby. His hair, combed straight back, is thinning. His cheeks are full & rosy; a small, cute nose, a weak chin. Pudgy hands, a red but rather undefined mouth. In repose he looks petulant: & in action he seems unsuited to his role. That high-pitched voice, its rising inflection & hysteria, its volume, seem to come not quite from him. The cut soprano quality is his, however; it suggests an essential weakness in him, his femininity.

And a philistine, too—to judge from his metaphors: "That's a subject for a *novel*" (sneered); "One might as well listen to a *symphony*" (ditto).

What a fantastic lie the man is living. He is living in Russia, 1917; he is forever addressing a Soviet of railroad & factory workers, an armed proletariat ready to shoot the works. The whole pitch of his effort is that of the last push—one ounce more & power is ours. He is insane. Either he knows the truth or not. If he does it may be tradition that

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makes him act so, or the leader's vanity; in any event there is no honesty in him. If he does not, it may be, as I think, insanity. A paranoia which enables him to judge the objective situation for what it is worth—but when it comes to himself makes him the great leader. The great, suffering, insatiable, nymphomaniac leader.

The Village story. A climactic scene: A seder, which soon degenerates into a cocktail party. The Haggadah is burlesqued, no one can read, no one understand. The host (I?), who has made an effort to reform, to fly right, live straight, also had thought by the celebration of Passover to celebrate his own passing over into the light, the warmth, the truth of his native tradition of Judaism, also succumbs to the degeneration. They light up tea; a fight (Calder?); he makes a play for the chick, leaves with her when the guests leave. Comes home very late. His wife is up. Dreads an explanation, but there is none. She says very calmly she is going to leave him the next day. No tears. The children are still up. They are amused by everything. They hear their mother talking but do not understand. They go about happily emptying the ash trays.

Levitas.* He objected to the title of Mary McCarthy's review ("Tyranny of the Orgasm") on the ground that "orgasm" wasn't the right kind of word to appear in the *New Leader.*# "It's like a man should stand with his *schmuck* out & piss in the middle of the street." It offended him & it made his good wife blush. He opened the paper on Sat. morning—& there it was—ha! And not only his wife, but Sidney Hook's—(hear, hear!). And James Burnham's! Etc. But orgasm is a central, a scientific term . . . what do you think it means? "Orgasm—*der kleiner Yankele stellt sich auf.*" Is that nice for the paper? A man with an erection?

Why the curious identification of orgasm exclusively with erection? Diminishing potency? And observe that the only way Levitas can mention sex is to drag it down to the men's smoker level of dirty words—*schmuck, putz* (I don't think there is a "decent" word for penis in Yiddish). The men's smoker—where all is forgiven, the attitude of so

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*Saul Levitas, then editor of the *New Leader.*

#Mary McCarthy's review of Modern Woman, The Lost Sex, in the *New Leader,* April 1947.

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many men of that generation. Perhaps, not knowing what they've missed, they must assure themselves they've missed nothing, must create the attitude of "schmuck-fuck-oh yes, we've had it all!" The sexual aspect of life is curiously socialized, made a common jesting thing, a social attitude redolent of poker, & cigar smoke, obscene after dinner hours—all to deprive it of personality, so it shall not be a thing of which a man must give his own account. They free themselves of all responsibility by throwing it to the dogs. Plus an original Puritanism, & so many other guilts acquired on the way. I've never been able to associate sex with my parents, my family, our own culture. It began, so to speak, with my own generation, with the boys & girls in grammar school—& if it existed before that time it was only among the *goyim*.

Levitas and Auden. "Who is this Alden?" "Auden. Perhaps the greatest poet living in America." "Bring him around." "He wouldn't care to come. Enough if he'd do a review for us." "Why shouldn't he come? Let him come to lunch. I want people should think of the *New Leader* not just as a paper, but as a movement, a house." "He has his own home." "So what? Let him come." "He won't, after all, he's Auden." "So if he's Auden? We've had plenty of big names at our dinners—Charles Angell, Simeon Strensky . . . . What are you laughing for?"

[A story told by William Phillips] Lionel and Harold R. were on the outs for some time.* Finally they got together this summer at East Hampton. Harold said, "We shouldn't quarrel, we should be friends. We've known each other for such a long time. But do you know, in all the seventeen years that we've known each other we've never once exchanged a personal remark."

Said Lionel: "Do you want me to be personal?"

"Go ahead."

Then said Lionel, "I think you're wasting your time writing nonsense & marginal stuff. You've never yet written anything central or important. And how can you stand Mae? If you ask me, I think you should divorce her."

"Why, you!" cried Harold & kicked him out of the house.

Oh, the exiles, self-deported from our mechanical business civili-

*Lionel Abel and Harold Rosenberg.

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zation. They have mastered mechanism—they have the machine within themselves. To be well *adjusted*, to *function*, to be rid of *repression* (which prevents the machine from running at its full speed). And certain *dividends*: the orgasm. They want *to get* something out of life, as out of an investment. Their great nay is an abject yea, an affirmation of corruption even at a lower level than society offers.

Lionel. Ralph Ross was once (years ago) at a party with him. Lionel suggested a game. "We sit in a circle & each person makes up insults about his neighbor. The point is to see how well we can take it." Everybody demurred. No game. But Ralph played a little game of his own. "Lionel," said he, "the reason you come out with such ideas is that you're afraid certain secrets of yours are known. You can't resist the temptation to find out if it is so. But everybody who's ever read your stories knows that they're nothing but watered-down imitations of Dostoevsky."

Lionel was furious. "You son of a bitch! Come over here, I'll punch you in the nose!" He was standing at the opposite end of the room.

"Why should I have to come to you for a punch in the nose? If you want to punch me, you come to me."

"You damned coward! Look what a coward he is. And he's bigger than me, too. He could kill me with one punch, the coward."

Everyone crowded round Lionel & quieted him. He sat down in a corner. The subject of conversation was quickly changed. Suddenly Lionel lit a match & set fire to his hair. The people jumped at him to smother the fire.

When the tumult had subsided, Ralph walked across the room & presented himself before Lionel. "Here I am, Lionel, I've come to you. Punch me in the nose!"

Lionel was terribly embarrassed.

"Now who's the coward? I could kill you with one punch. But I won't touch you. I promise you, on my word, I won't lay a hand on you. Go ahead & punch me, Dostoevsky imitator. You've carried imitation too far. You think you're a Dostoevsky character yourself. But you're a rotten fake, a plagiarizer."

Lionel, his hair scorched, it was giving off a powerful burnt odor, ran into the other room, grabbed his hat & coat & ran out of the house.

(Ralph in the above, shows himself, of course, to be infinitely the worse character.)

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The trouble with Paul Goodman, the anarcho-Reichians, the whole gang, is a failing of instinctive wisdom. They have their theory; given that, it's as though nothing else were needed. Sex repression is bad—so let's have freedom. No more "Sturm und Drang," no more starved, embittered adolescence. Sexual freedom for children! But they forget the value repression must have had in their own lives, the intensity & eagerness it produced, the over-evaluation of knowledge—political activity, recklessness—in a word, idealism. It is always so in the adolescence of intellectuals. The best, the purest, the freest moments occur during the starvation-in-the-midst-of-plenty of the post-pubertal period. Surely, as we look back on our "wasted youth," our experience must tell us to be grateful. But no, the theory says otherwise. And so they think only as the theory requires them to think. They have no direct contact left with life, no regard for an experience *as* experience, no celebration of what has been lived & suffered—no understanding. And despite the consequences—that so smooth a path might entirely take away the need or opportunity for sublimation, for eagerness, idealism, the over-evaluation of intellectual objects, with the probable result of the sapping of the creative impulse, the death of all art—& doesn't Paul say, in an ideal society there'd be no art—or is it no *need* for art? (but what's the difference?)—in spite of all that wisdom must say to the contrary, they have their theory, & their theoretical personalities, & that's all they care about. This damnation is salvation.

But the fault is already contained in their failure to respond to life, directly, without premeditation; their loss of spontaneity through having the virtue of spontaneity drilled into them. And a metaphysical failure—their low regard for being. "Praised be the fathomless universe. . . ."

Well, the other way *is* a wish, of course. Many an adolescent is broken by it. But granted energy, vitality, the risk must be taken.

Max Lerner has ceased being a person & has become a reflex. The other night we were suffering through the stage presentation of *All the King's Men,* Maxie seated right in front of us. "How do you like it?" we asked, not really thinking the cautious approach necessary; our expressions, at least, showed what we thought of it—what so help me no one could help thinking of that shit. "Oh," said M.L., "I think it's very interesting as a dramatization of the American Myth."

The public reflex. Everything predicated on his being a public figure, all of whose opinions are important to the conduct of life. Ask

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him if he takes sugar in his tea, and he'll tell you it's of considerable significance to a democracy. . . .

I've never known anyone so much afraid of life as Randall Jarrell. He attacks the North: there's no grass & trees; then, people are unfriendly; next, murderous; insensate, unloving, without tradition or community. By this time it's clear, he couldn't stand the competition; he prefers the smaller pond down South. Well enough. But everyone's got to be friend & family to him. The nonsense! "Run your hand across the map from down around here clear across in an arc & up to the West—that's where all the friendly people live." Of course, the South is bad on labor & trade unions, which is unfortunate, but still. . . . And while he talks, about this or anything, his face falls into a hundred creases: the smiling Bugs Bunny teeth, the puckered anxious forehead, the lines of anxiety twisting his mouth & graven into the corners of his eyes. He can't stand interruption; abides it with held breath, with the spinster school marm's impatient patience, hurt. Cal Lowell at one point made a joke & he said, "Are you really interested or are you just making conversation?" He was talking about a house. We all had to reassure him we were really interested & he went on in a tight voice until he could make a joke of his own & let the hostility come out.

He's always saying the wrong thing. To Ransom, who spoke of getting an article on Chekhov from Bentley, "He showed me that a year ago. It was too long for *The Nation*. *PR* rejected it too." Then, when he realized he'd said too much: "He didn't send it to you first, because he didn't want to force it on you. You know—in the family." Again to Ransom, when R. was speaking of a gay old Billy goat of a man he knew who said to R & his friend G.—"When I see a pretty woman, I go & take her." "We're not at all worried," said G. "And G's wife," put in Randall, "is a very attractive woman." His wife, Mackie, gave him a mild, reproachful look, mild so it shouldn't show to others. He shook his head, as if to say, "Never mind, darling, it doesn't matter." But his forehead was creased & his face wrinkled. Again, when he had two girls over to his house, poetry students, both lilac brooms. The short, stout one like a strong broom for a thick carpet, the tall, skinny one, a long-handled broom for reaching in under the radiator. (And she had huge teeth, just like his, & a short upper lip, which, she is aware, always curls up to show her teeth & she tries to pull it down.) Their hair gives the broomlike impression. They wear it straight down & fanning out, stiff as straw. Randall got to talking about a girl in his class, how ugly

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she was. He went at it & at it; the tall one sat with her hand over her lip; the short one with her shoulders hunched together, looking down at the floor. He overdoes both praise & censure, an excess of hostility & concealment of hostility.

He clings to whatever will give him comfort. To the repressed South, the advantages of non-coeducational schools for women, to academic, non-or-anti-Freudian psychology ("It's not scientific"), etc. Poet.

Whenever Lowell was present, Randall's talk was a flow of metaphors. ("She's humorous in a dry, twinkling sort of way.") Still, he has a real generous impulse to make up for the faults he recognizes in himself, & over & beyond that; & he has had a good effect on the girls' poetry, freeing them of imitation. He is a good teacher & has done much for his friends.

Ransom. A mild, elderly gentleman, Southern without much accent. When he calls a story a "fiction," it suits him; it's not an affectation. Blue eyes, gray white hair that was once yellow, a round, small nose, a relaxed manner with little of the usual show of dignity, but a natural dignity comes out. Admire his openness. He changes opinions, seems to have no dogma & shows considerable courage in coming, late in life, to accept materialism. (He accepts it & is straightforward about it, much more than Randall.) Not dogma but something that functions as dogma (as Willy would say "in his smile"): tradition, stories about kinfolk, but with the limitation that this is no longer a basis for politics. Stories: Brother Craig & the veteran: "I'm glad to see you're back, but I wouldn't want you to think that I'm gladder than I really am," and the white turkey that showed up one day from nowhere, nigh unto Thanksgiving.

Willy & Herb, schmuck-baiters, at work on Edith, Hilbert, Ray & Klonsky.* They tell Edith that their father was a great scholar, a gambler, a white slave trader & the owner of a string of two-bit

*Willie and Herb Poster, Ray Rosenthal, Hilbert Schwartz, and Milton Klonsky. I haven't been able to identify Edith. Like many of Rosenfeld's recollections and anecdotes, this one is probably highly elaborated and halfway into fictional form. It is doubtful that Klonsky actually went looking for the Morris Plan literary advisor.

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Brooklyn whore houses. That he was disgusted with them because they did not yet know how to speak Sanskrit at the age of three; & with their mother, because she understood no Latin Vulgate. That the meals & the ordinary household business were conducted only in Egyptian. That once, when Einstein paid them a visit, father took him to one of his twenty-five cent houses. They owe their present antiacademicism to their hatred of their father; rebelling against him & his discipline, they promptly forgot the languages & sciences he taught them, & have a distaste amounting to nausea, for the classics.

Hilbert they tell of an amorous woman with a passion for intellectuals. They have him panting in no time. But there are certain drawbacks: she's mad, absolutely crazy, & a little queer besides. She sometimes won't let a man go. The last man she had she kept locked in her room, without food or water, for three weeks. No matter to Hilbert, he wants her. But she prefers exotic men. "Exotic? Alright, I'll be exotic." "Who, you? How can you?" They think it over. Perhaps an Indian. "But we'll have to stain your skin." Hilbert is willing. Mahogany or walnut? It doesn't matter. Do it, quick, & lead him to her!" "I wanted to see," says Willy, "how far greed would take him. He was actually willing to be stained mahogany, with no thought at all, whether the stain was permanent!" They kept him strung for three weeks. Also Ray, who was angry when he finally caught on. The Edith story also worked on Rhoda & Fay who, till this day, have not been able to work their way completely out of it.

Milton they stung with the Morris Plan. He showed up one day, broke, asking for money. "Have you never heard of the Morris Plan? Go sell them an idea. You write out an idea for an article, story, feature, poem, etc., & leave it as security against your loan. If you don't return the money in the agreed time, they get in touch with their connections in magazines, newspapers, publishing houses, etc., & sell it for a profit. Many books have been written this way—they follow up with a list of Morris Plan books. Louis Bromfield is well known as a Providential Loan author." "Just like you intellectuals. No respect for ideas. You think they're cheap. In America, ideas are worth money!" Klonsky leaves the house, convinced. Weeks pass, they don't see him. When they finally meet, he is angry, distant, cold. One day he sits within three feet of Herb in the park & pretends not to see him. A very probable conjecture, that he followed their advice, went to the Morris Plan office & asked to see the literary adviser.

"If you're going to bait someone," Willy concludes with a wisdom worthy of Hitler, "make sure it's absolutely fantastic & unbelievable."

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Sunday afternoon at the Mayberry's place in New Jersey everyone fell asleep, Nitsa & their kids, Vasiliki, Jane & Louise upstairs, George stretched out on the living room floor, not far from the fireplace.* Little Georgie & I, the only ones who are awake in the whole house. A heavy, damp day, raining intermittently (no sun until 7:00 P.M., when we were preparing to leave) one of those Sunday afternoons when the necessity of sleep can become the greatest bourgeois virtue.

George was the first asleep, even while the others were stepping over him & around him. I did not notice how he was sleeping until long after the house was quiet. He lay, arms thrown back & one knee raised, his head twisted to one side in a position that seemed so uncomfortable, surely one must wake for a moment if he happened to fall into it; he kept it, unchanged, for over two hours. His mouth was wide open (the room slowly filling with the smell of the many martinis, beers, and shots of whisky he had already drunk). The upper lip was swollen & flapped down over his teeth, sucked in with every breath he drew & flung out with the inhaling. He snored, but so loudly & with such agony that again, one must wake from such snoring alone, deep, rasping, painful breaths, as in the desperation of a disease, drawing it in, holding it, forcing it out, the expression of his face growing always more pained & intense. Dead to the world & to himself, twisted & abandoned, not knowing how he must appear to the conscious observer, all life suspended & only the inner life going on, dreaming dreams whose meaning he does not know & which he will probably not even remember.

How little of our life is conscious, & of that how little is actually our own! Awake or asleep we are possessed by forces of which we are unaware for motives which we do not know or understand. And even the past that is our own, claimed, with the best will, by the activity of heart, hands & mind, is linked with the unconscious past—for what reason, to what purpose? The body is constantly engaged in dying & the psyche is content with death's slow rate—with destroying itself, so that the idea of living in harmony with one's natural forces seems all but hopeless.

Discovery—Where feelings are not dealt with directly, where they

*George Mayberry was an associate editor at *New Republic* in the mid-forties when Rosenfeld was a major contributor to the back of the book. The members of the Rosenfeld family here are Vasiliki and the children, Eleni (or Nitsa) and George.

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are not expressed or released in the prose, where they are dammed up, they tend to explode in the form of strong, striking images.

Conversely, where the flow & release of feelings is steady, where feeling is in large part the subject matter, images tend to disappear, figures of speech even drop out or are met with rarely. Thus Tolstoy, in whom such imagery is low. The feelings are released. There is little left for imagery to draw on. But when there is a temporary interruption in the stream, when his feelings on a subject cannot be entirely expressed—you do get an image, like the sudden, startling one of the murderer, after Vronsky & Anna have intercourse for the first time. Or the image, "like a dog trained to jump through the hoop," apropos of Levin's marriage.

This does not, however, apply to symbolism, which goes on, & proceeds from, a deeper level, an unconscious level. Feelings are but the conscious manifestation of the unconscious process.

Kafka, Gogol, etc.—feelings held back; bright images.

Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, etc.—feelings released; low image content.

The defeat of Dewey delighted me; the extent of the pleasure I took in it was an even greater surprise to me than the unexpected outcome. In the morning, waiting with Nitsa on the corner for the bus to take her to school, I laughed & sang, "Ho-ho-ho—goody-goody-goody" as if to answer my daughter (she repeated it, laughing), but in reality to confound the two glum men & the woman, obviously Republicans, with heavy, bitter, hateful, purplish faces, tense as a fist, who were also waiting for the bus. I gloated & rejoiced as if this were somehow my triumph over mediocrity in the form of that ambitions side of back-bacon, little Tom. Oh, how I danced in glee! Not that I cared a shit for Harry, but Dewey—ho-ho-hoooo! That chilly, gelid, pompous excrescence of secondary processes, that turd of a fish in rain water! His humiliation was my joy, the thought of him sitting up all night by the radio, his carefully prepared speech of acceptance—"The people have made up their minds and acted. Unity! Liberty! Security! A sound foreign policy!"—folded in his breast pocket, his teeth aching with dismay, his face freezing, the very moustache of a crewcropped cunt ready to wilt and drop off—Oh brother, remember me at mealtime when you daily sit down to your plate of shit! It is for me, for me only, you parboiled goose, that you have strutted in your elevator shoes, and driven your one implacable, all-devouring ambition, which has shaped not only your obscene life, but your very skull, changing the contour of the back of your head into a dominating rigidity, mama's boy, over

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everything the least way human in you, you lovely, proper monster, choir boy and attorney, prosecuting vice to the unheard accompaniment of your secretly yearning, sniggering, reprocessed rubber heart—it is for me that you sat up all night, your eyes sticking together like a diseased whore's labia, it is for me that you suffered, that I might spit at everything in myself which is the least way like you, that I, also a small and ambitious and frightened and false little monster, might glory in self-destruction and in the discomfiture of the Republican host. I understand you, Tom Dewey, how well! You, too, have looked at the fatheads about you and sworn to prove to yourself that not one of them, not one, is better than you. But they have failed you, they have borne you down, and me they have uplifted. Smart, brother, in your rejection, while I gloat in mine!

Eliot's ideas are not those of a man who is daring, *vorausgehend,* enterprising toward life, but rather of a man who is in retreat but would like to make his retreat appear a voluntary retirement from action. Accordingly he has called every traditional idea, which would make for the control of life-energy, to his support; but being well set in his defense, he can let his ideas go, to persuade others. This is called "culture" in our time.

A man simply says, "I am overwhelmed by the sadness of life!" But one who has caught and is rotting away from the disease, analysitis, says, "A loss in orgastic potency has caused me to say, 'I am overwhelmed by the sadness of life.'"

The smells of sex, the smell of arm pits and breasts, the smell of smegma and sweat, and the smell of the body, apart from any odors, but of the warm life in it.

The form in which orgone theory is handed round is often very funny. Thus I was talking to Bill Steig,* who said, "A new bulletin has just come out. Very exciting. Reich says that light doesn't come from the sun."

It turns out that this is merely an account of the diffusion of light

*William Steig, cartoonist and illustrator, was also a Reichian, and did the illustrations for Reich's *Listen, Little Man* in 1948.

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through the atmosphere, by the excitation of the orgone through solar energy. But the form in which this news comes—"Stop the press. Light doesn't come from the sun!"—is undeniably fun.

Or must I suppose that to the degree I find such things funny, to that degree I am still resisting and looking for a way out?

A visit to *Commentary* to hand in the article on Gandhi. They've had a piece of mine, on Jewish Orthodoxy, waiting two years to get published. Oh, well! I've been paid. But the sad thing is how their opinions have changed—Nat Glazer's and Irving Kristol's. At one time, had it been published when I first handed it in, said Nat, he would have agreed with me—that Orthodoxy anywhere is bad & that that intellectual ought to be heterodox, always with the avant garde—& Irving smiled sadly & shook his head. It's hard to believe that they, young men, should have gone Orthodox! But their misery apparently is increasing. Nat smiles less, he is heavier, more perplexed & anxious looking; Irv smiles more—but a fishy smile, a staring smile. And Bob Warshow looks dangerously ill—his voice is more pinched off than ever & he is cross & irritable. Even Dick, the office boy, has grown clumsy & fat. And they all agreed, of course, in attacking Reich & calling psychoanalysis nonsense.

It was income tax day. Irving practically had to be forced to itemize his deductions & save the 15 dollars (he said probably more) in additional taxes he was prepared to pay, above the 300 dollars or so he had already withdrawn from his salary. And he argued with me that a writer should write and not bother with psychology!

Alas, alas. Youth is fleeting. The young men locked in offices, locked in stale marriages & growing quietly, desperately ill.

A catatonic seizure in therapy. As result of the breathing & muscular manipulation, so much energy breaks through, & I take such strong defensive measures against it, that my arms double up & lie twisted over my chest, my fingers in the spastic position; my lips are drawn in & tingling, my eyes twitching—& everything hurts, the muscles of my legs, belly & back & face. I am sure I have the expression of a corpse. This frequently occurs, says Singer,* in people of low charge—& he advises me to get an accumulator. I am more than ever

*Dr. Richard J. Singer, whom Rosenfeld and his wife began to see early in 1949.

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curious to know what this means—prognosis & diagnosis—but for the sake of the therapy I must shut up. And I do. Dammit.

The other night one of my Stalinist students who always interrupts the class with Gospel said, during the talk on Tolstoy, following the remark that Russia had always lagged behind the West in industrialization and science, "Have you read in the paper where the seismograph detected a strong trembling of the earth in the vicinity of Tolstoy's birthplace?" And his eyes blinked happily in the vision of the atom bomb.

"Just Tolstoy turning over in his grave," said I.

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Ronald Hayman

NIETZSCHE'S MADNESS

Someone who cannot come to terms with the life he is living needs one hand to fend off his despair over his fate . . . but with the other hand he can note down what he sees among the ruins, for he sees different things from other people (and more things); after all, dead as he is in his own lifetime, he is the real survivor.

Kafka had read Nietzsche when he was about fifteen, and passages like this in the diaries are not merely reminiscent of the influence: they point to a profound affinity between the two men. Nietzsche did not dislike himself or disapprove of himself so much as Kafka, but both wanted to cancel the unsatisfactory present in favour of the future. In *Human All Too Human* (1878) Nietzsche wrote: "The thinker—and similarly the artist—who has put the best of himself into his work experiences an almost malicious joy as he watches the erosion of his body and spirit by time. It is as if he were in a corner watching a thief at his safe, while knowing that it is empty, his treasure being elsewhere." He wanted to believe that his writing could constitute a higher self, his pain-racked physical existence being no more than a stepping-stone towards it. Fighting stubbornly against headaches, pain in and around the eyes, vomiting, debility, exhaustion, he evolved the idea of self-conquest, but there can be no self-conquest without self-defeat. Like Kafka, he mortgaged his life to his writing, and kept threatening himself with foreclosure. As he put it in one of the brief autobiographical dialogues in *The Gay Science* (1882)

—You are moving faster and faster away from the living. Soon they will cross you off their list.

—It is the only way to share the privilege of the dead.

—What privilege?

—Not to die any more.

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His childhood headaches were bad enough to keep him in bed, and from the age of nine, he missed a great deal of schooling through illness. He was twelve when he started to have trouble with his eyes. He had inherited myopia from his father, and for six years, from the age of fourteen, he was at Schulpforta, a converted monastery with windows that admitted too little daylight, while additional eyestrain may have been caused by the feeble oil lamps the boys had on their tables in the evenings. During his six years at the school he suffered frequently from headaches, catarrh, stomachache, rheumatism, a sore throat, and hoarseness; he had protracted spells in the sanatorium, and twice he was sent to convalesce at home. The pupils of his eyes—like his mother's—were of unequal size, and his father, who had suffered from a mild epilepsy, died when he was thirty-five from "softening of the brain." It may have been syphilitic, and he may have infected his wife, causing her pupils to become unequal in size (which is one of the disease's symptoms), so that Nietzsche may have been infected while in the womb, but the evidence is not conclusive. We know that a quarter of his father's brain had been affected by the softening, but we do not know in which area.

At the university and during Nietzsche's year of military service, his health was generally better until he damaged his breastbone against the pommel of his saddle when jumping myopically onto his horse. The serious physical decline began when he was twenty-six—at the beginning of his third year as professor of classical philology at the University of Basel, when he began to suffer from insomnia, stomachache, hemorrhoids, and exhaustion. He was given sick leave, but the headaches soon resumed, together with the eye trouble. Writing to congratulate his mother on her forty-ninth birthday, he warned her "not to follow the absurd example of your esteemed son, who has started ailing far too early in life, and already, like a little old man, is grateful for each day he is not reminded of indigestion and pains. . . ." During his thirties the headaches became worse, sometimes lasting for as long as six days. Sometimes he would start to vomit bile and go on vomiting all day. He felt convinced that all the physical symptoms "were deeply intertwined with spiritual crises, so that I have no idea how medicine and diet could ever be enough to restore my health." The secret was "to acquire a certain hardness of the skin, because of the great inner vulnerability and capacity for suffering."

The history of malaise is integral to the history of madness. It might at first seem to us, as it might at first have seemed to him, that, with his inescapable ill health, he could afford to go mad: he would

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have less to lose than if he had felt comfortable inside his skin. Later it would come to seem more as though he could not afford to remain sane.

There was nothing sudden about his movement into madness. He was only twenty-four when he wrote: "What frightens me is not the fearful shape behind the chair but its voice; also not the words but the terrifyingly inarticulated, inhuman tone of that shape. Yes, if only it would speak in a human way." In 1880, when he wrote *Dawn*, he made the point that madness—or at least the semblance of it—had been the *sine qua non* of moral evolution. The men driven to reject tradition and propose new norms had either had to feign madness or to cultivate it. The recipe he offers for inducing it is like a distorting mirror focused on his own life: inordinate fasting, continual sexual abstinence, withdrawal into the wilderness, or climbing a mountain, or onto a pillar, or "sitting on an ancient willow facing a lake." His sexual abstinence was largely involuntary, but his eccentric and inadequate diet was determined partly by poverty, partly by masochistic self-discipline. Physical comfort was of less importance to him than ambition to be one of the great moral innovators. Insofar as he thought about madness as a price he might have to pay, he does not seem to have been scared of it. On one level he genuinely believed that his incessant wanderings were in search of the climate in which he would suffer least, but he was also, in his way, withdrawing into the wilderness. When he decided to spend the winter of 1880 in Genoa, his sister wrote to ask whether he would like one of his friends to join him. His answer was: "I want to be my own doctor, and so I must be true to myself in the deepest sense, and no longer listen to anyone else. I cannot tell you how much good *solitude* is doing me."

That premise is at the opposite pole from Hegel's assumption that to take permanent refuge in an inner world is to miss the chance of coming fully to life. "Once a man's social instincts are dislocated," he wrote in his essay on the German constitution, "and he is obliged to throw himself into interest peculiarly his own, his nature becomes so deeply perverted that his energy is concentrated on refusing to conform." Both philosophers come close to equating sanity with conformity and madness with isolation: the difference is that Nietzsche is hostile to society and its norms. The argument in favour of solitary eccentricity is developed in *The Gay Science*, which treats madness as if it were the alternative to blind faith. Like the Romantics, Nietzsche believed the most authentic experience to be the most individual, while his prejudice against institutions which claimed canonical authority

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was intensified by the compulsion to justify the urge that had made him throw off the Wagnerian yoke—the urge towards independence. Inevitably, he went to the extreme, favouring all deviation from the norm, condemning all subservience to what he called "the morality of mores." The man who renounces (*der Entsagende*) "aspires to a higher world. He wants to fly further and higher than the men who affirm. The madman's world has its Antipodes not in truth and certainty, but in the generalities and the general restrictiveness of a faith." Not that Nietzsche could afford to commit himself unequivocally to supporting madness against conformism: in the same paragraph he warns us that the greatest danger hanging over humanity is an "eruption of *madness*—an outbreak of arbitrariness in feeling, hearing, and seeing; pleasure in mental indiscipline; joy in human unreason." But in the crucial passage about the death of God he uses a madman as his spokesman.

In *Human All Too Human* (1877–1878) he claimed that an interest in degeneracy and ambivalence is an essential prerequisite to self-analysis: where there is no self-division there is nothing to analyse. According to Freud, who maintained that Nietzsche had attained a degree of introspection never achieved by anyone else, before or since, there was an element of homosexual narcissism in his preoccupation with his own ego, but I can find no basis for the rumour, which both Jung and Freud helped to propagate, that he contracted syphilis in a Genoese male brothel. (See *Minutes of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society*, volumes one and two.) In 1883, recuperating from the experience with Lou Salomé, he envisaged the possibility of having a mental breakdown; when he tried to show that ill health was a qualification for making philosophical pronouncements, all his arguments applied equally to incipient madness. It is in the final section of *The Genealogy of Morals* (1887) that he makes his most discursive attempt to validate the authority of the sick philosopher. "Since the healthy cannot be expected to take care of the sick, we need doctors and nurses who are themselves sick. The healthy man can digest his misdeeds as he does his meals, even if there are tough morsels to be chewed, but sickliness is normal. Man is the sick animal, insecure, inconstant, indeterminate."

He had already suggested in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) that consciousness was pathological and philosophy (like art) therapeutic. But the therapist had to be sick. Spinoza's interest in the will to life derived from his being a consumptive. All philosophical idealism has been "something like a disease," unless, as with Plato, it was a prudent attempt to preserve equilibrium against the pressure of "a dangerously

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excessive healthiness, *extremely potent* senses." As for "us moderns"—Nietzsche was probably thinking of himself—"Perhaps we are merely not healthy enough to be in need of Plato's idealism. We are not afraid of the senses because—." The broken sentence is significant, and nothing is more significant about it than its brokenness. Nietzsche held that "Nothing at all about the philosopher is impersonal; above all his morality provides decided and decisive evidence about *who he is*—i.e., the relative positioning of the innermost drives in his nature." He also suggested that poets—he mentions Byron, Musset, Poe, Leopardi, Kleist, and Gogol but no doubt he was, as always, thinking of himself—revenge themselves in their works for an "inner pollution, often taking flight from an all-too-persistent memory, often bogged down and almost enamoured of the muck, until they become will-o'-the-wisps around the swamp, *pretending* to be stars—people then call them idealists." What was the inner pollution in Nietzsche?

We must not confuse the problem of whether the source of his lifelong malaise was congenital with the problem of whether he believed it to be congenital. At Pforta the school doctor noted that "attention must be paid to the antecedents," and though there is no suggestion in Nietzsche's early correspondence that he was thinking of his ailments in terms of heredity, this does not prove that the idea never crossed his mind. The first recorded reference to the possibility of an inherited tendency to madness occurred in 1884 when he spoke to a young Austrian friend, Resa von Schirnhofer, about the visions he had when he closed his eyes: "He saw a profusion of fantastic flowers, twining round each other and constantly growing, changing in shape and colour with exotic opulence, one sprouting wildly out of another . . . Then suddenly, with his great, dark eyes fixed on me anxiously, and with disturbing urgency in his soft voice, he asked: 'Don't you believe this condition is a symptom of incipient madness? My father died of a brain disease.'" And writing to Overbeck in July 1888, he explained his "nervous exhaustion" as "partly acquired, partly inherited—from my father who also died after apparently losing all his stamina." Writing *Ecce Homo*, which he started three months later, he seems to have been thinking of the disease as hereditary, but as more of an advantage than a disability. "I regard it as a great privilege to have had such a father: it even seems to me that this explains all my other privileges, except for life, the great Yes to life." To enter into the world of higher experiences, all he had to do was wait, and, once there, he felt at home. "Almost paying with my life for this privilege was not buying it at too high a price."

One of his central problems, throughout his life, had been to cope

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with the patent impotence of his formidable intellect in dealing with pain and indisposition. The best stratagem was to remind himself that his psychological insights derived from self-observation, and that his talent for it might never have developed but for his malaise. And in concentrating on the voluntary element, the cruelty necessary to self-conquest, he could forget what was beyond his control.

> This secret self-ravishment, this artistic cruelty, this lust to impose form on oneself as on a tough, resistant, suffering material, cauterising into oneself a will, a criticism, a contradiction, a contempt, a negation; this uncanny, weirdly enjoyable labour of a voluntarily divided soul making itself suffer out of pleasure in causing suffering, finally this whole, *active* "bad conscience"—you can guess already—as the true womb of all ideal and imaginative experience.

The affinity with Kafka depends partly on masochism: once the soul is divided, the pleasure of the one half is fed by the pain of the other. "Everything I possess," wrote Kafka, "is directed against me; what is directed against me is no longer a possession . . . I am nothing but a mass of spikes going through me." Triumphantly passive, the sadistic self takes notes while the masochistic self wriggles. Nietzsche in his cult of the cruelty necessary to self-conquest had more elaborate stratagems. The self is kept more deeply submerged. In Kafka's fiction desire is often apparent, if seldom gratified; Nietzsche rightly castigates idealist philosophers for leaving the body out of account, but in his own work sexuality is either repressed or sublimated. Eroticism is sometimes admitted to his verse but seldom to his prose, except in the second book of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883). "Night has fallen: only now do the songs of lovers come to life. My soul too is the song of a lover . . . Light am I. Would I were night! But this is my loneliness, to be girdled with light. Would I were dark, nocturnal. How I wanted to suck at the breasts of light." But here the memory of sexual humiliation at the hands of Lou Salomé was adding a morbid piquancy to the literary experience.

> But I live in my own light. The flames that break out of me I drink back into myself. I do not know the bliss of receiving and I have often dreamed it must be still more blessed to steal than to receive. That is my poverty: my hand never rests from giving . . . Hunger grows out of my beauty: I wish to hurt those I enlighten, steal from those who benefit—this is my evil appetite.

The mask is slipping: Zarathustra is speaking directly out of

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Nietzsche's experience, as in the next section, which dithyrambically characterises both life and wisdom as flirtatious girls. "Wholeheartedly I love only life—and, verily, never more than when I hate it."

> He is attracted to Wisdom, but she is so much like life: She has her eyes, her smile and even her little golden fishing-rod . . . One's thirst for her is never slaked, one glimpses her through veils, reaches through nets . . . She is volatile and wayward. I have often seen her bite her lip and comb her hair the wrong way.

Obliquely, perversely, he is declaring his love for Lou, provoking himself in order to subdue himself, and when he asks whether it is not foolish still to be alive, he is reaffirming the burden of his depression. "In the details (of the book) there is an incredible amount of personal experience and suffering, intelligible only to me. Many pages struck me as almost *bloodstained.*" In the earlier books the lengthy sections dealing with women and marriage contain no such evidence of desire, the writing being mostly based on personal observation, or on Schopenhauerian misogyny, but not on personal experience.

Nietzsche's sexual drive seems to have been abnormally low. While at school he told his friend Paul Deussen that he was going to need at least three women, but Deussen was finally left with the impression that Nietzsche remained a virgin throughout his life. And we have the evidence of Professor Hersing, who had been a member of the same student fraternity, Franconia, that Nietzsche was "not a student who liked having fun. There was no sign of any need to sow wild oats." In the fourth book of *Zarathustra* he was to write caustically about male sexual abstinence. Zarathustra says that he always suspects the motives of men who embrace chastity, while Nietzsche took Hölderlin and Leopardi to task for "contradicting the simplest facts, e.g., the fact that a man sometimes needs a woman just as he sometimes needs a well-cooked meal." But Nietzsche himself seemed to need neither women nor well-cooked meals as often as most men do. Though Freud had not yet formulated his ideas about sublimation, Nietzsche anticipates them in what is patently a rationalisation of his self-denial:

> Every artist knows how damaging intercourse is in states of great spiritual tension or preparation; those with the greatest power and the best instincts do not need to learn this from experience, from unfortunate experience. For the benefit of the evolving work their "maternal" instinct disposes ruthlessly of all other stored or accumulated energy, all animal vigour.

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In January 1889, when he was interrogated at the Jena asylum, Nietzsche said that he had infected himself twice in 1866. We know that he went to a brothel in 1865, but he claimed to have come away without touching anything except a piano. He may have gone back later, as Thomas Mann suggests, and if he did contract the disease, either there or elsewhere, the experience may have helped to cause his subsequent sexual reticence and the halfheartedness of his attempts to get married.

In any event, the self-denial was not merely sexual. His first reaction to Schopenhauer is revealing: he became so self-contemptuous that he imposed penances on himself, allowing himself no more than four hours of sleep each night for two successive weeks. In committing himself to study classical philology at the university, he was consciously frustrating his artistic impulses and submitting himself to a discipline he expected to be stringent. In his undergraduate work on Theognis of Megara, Suidas, Diogenes Laertius, and Democritus, he distinguished himself by virtue of a skepticism that smacks of self-denial. As he wrote later, "The belief in truth starts with doubt about all truths in which one has previously believed." Research was a partly destructive experience: he had to fight his way through previous misconceptions. "One is no longer satisfied with one answer, but goes on asking questions . . . Doubt is now *de rigueur,* just as belief used to be."

During this formative period, his self-confidence grew around this negative pole. Unconsciously he was laying the foundations for the linguistic skepticism he was to voice in his seminal essay on "Truth and Falsehood in an Extra-moral Sense" (1873). Previously it had been taken for granted that words could convey the objective truth about external reality; Nietzsche saw that there can be no question of objectivity. Since we cannot help being defrauded, we have evolved linguistic conventions to defraud ourselves reassuringly. Language is like an umbrella we can hold up against awareness that the universe was not created for our convenience, that far from being well disposed to us it is hostile.

> So what is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, anthropomorphisms—in short an aggregate of human relationships which, poetically and rhetorically heightened, became transposed and elaborated, and which, after protracted popular usage, poses as fixed, canonical, obligatory. Truths are illusions whose illusoriness is overlooked.

He had previously arrived at the Kantian idea that Nature had thrown

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away the key of the consciousness into which humanity was locked. Kant apologised for having to abolish knowledge in order to make way for faith; Nietzsche taught the truth that we have to live without truth.

While this insight looks forward to twentieth-century linguistics, Freudian psychology is anticipated in his denial of the self as a coherent entity. The Cartesian *cogito* had not only ignored the body in deducing existence from cerebration, it had begged some important questions:

> Where does the concept *thinking* derive from? Why do I believe in cause and effect? What gives me the right to speak of an "I," and even of an "I" as cause, and finally of an "I" as cause of thought? It is falsifying the facts to say that the subject "I" is a condition of the predicate "think." A thought comes when "it" wants, not when "I" want . . . *It* thinks, but that this "it" is identical with the good old "I" is at best only an assumption.

Indubitably, Freud was indebted to Nietzsche via Georg Groddeck, but the essential point had already been made in the eighteenth century by Lichtenberg and in May 1871 by a boy who was not yet seventeen: "It is a mistake to say 'I think'," wrote Arthur Rimbaud in a letter to Georges Izambard. "One should say 'I am being thought.'—Forgive the wordplay. *I* is someone else." Without questioning the validity of the insight, we should examine its neurotic roots. Leo Bersani has suggested that Rimbaud's repudiation of the self that does the thinking may be connected with his ambition to make poetry mean as little as possible. Similarly Nietzsche's denial of the self may be connected with his denial that it is possible to make objective statements about reality, and both denials may stem from the neurosis that made him say no to everything, including his own desires. Rimbaud rejected his family, his country, religion, society, and almost the entire history of literature. Temperamentally, the placid Nietzsche could hardly have been more different from the aggressive Rimbaud, but Nietzsche rejected his family and his country, living outside Germany and irrationally persuading himself that he was of Polish descent. He came to reject the whole tradition of idealist philosophy from Plato to Schopenhauer, and he exiled himself from society. In short, he rejected virtually the whole of contemporary reality, compensating himself with a fantasy about the future, but he would have been deeply mortified to realise that his fantasy of the *Übermensch* as a bridge to the future was only a variant on Wagner's idea of Siegfried. On 25 January 1854, Wagner had written to August Röckel that Wotan "summarises the intelligence of

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the present, whereas Siegfried is the man of the future. We want him, and wish for his arrival, yet we cannot create him. He must create himself by means of our annihilation."

To Nietzsche too it seemed that large-scale destruction must supervene before the future he wanted could be born. "When truth starts battling with the lies of millennia, we shall have convulsions, a spasm of earthquakes, a displacement of mountain and valley such as no-one has dreamed of." In *The Genealogy of Morals* (1887) he had criticised Aquinas for taking pleasure in the idea that the world would be destroyed by fire on the Day of Judgment, but here, in *Ecce Homo* he is enjoying his own jeremiads, which have an accuracy that suggests the wars of the twentieth century. "The concept of politics will be assimilated wholly into ideological warfare, all the power structures of the old society will be blown up . . . There will be wars such as there have never been on earth." In fact, unlike Aquinas, he is associating himself personally with his apocalyptic prophecy. "One day my name will be associated with something catastrophic—a crisis such as there has never been on earth, the most profound collision of conscience . . . I am not a man, I am dynamite." By now he was mentally unbalanced, but he is not saying much more than he had said in a letter of February 1884 to Malwida von Meysenbug: "It is possible that I am a fatality for all the coming generations of mankind, that I am their doom. Consequently it is very possible that I will one day fall silent; out of love for humanity!!!"

He did fall silent, but only after going mad. The relish for the holocaust is almost reminiscent of de Sade: in *Justine* Madam Clairwil dreams of committing a crime which will go on causing chaos even after her death. As Gilles Deleuze argues, the apathy of the Sadean libertine depends on the masochistic pleasure of "denying nature within the self and outside the self, and denying the self itself." As an immoralist Nietzsche was incomparably more conscientious than de Sade, but what they had in common was a profound fear of desire as a destructive force: hence their fantasies of destruction on a massive scale. And because he could never come to terms with the libido, Nietzsche was bound to fail in his project of compensating for an unsatisfactory life by means of satisfying work. It may have seemed to him that it was only human mediocrity he was rejecting in his fantasy of the Superman; in fact it was also human desire.

Was he aware of the extent to which he was denying and repressing libidinous forces which were finding their way through into vengeful predictions? His self-observation was merciless, but he tended

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to depersonalise the conclusions he drew. His concept of *Verinnerlichung* (internalisation) anticipates Jung's *introversion*, reviving a seventeenth-century word to suggest the process by which libido is turned inwards. As Nietzsche puts it, "All instincts that cannot be released outwards will turn inwards," but he equates this with the development of "soul." "The whole inner world, originally as thin as if stretched between two membranes, expanded outwards and upwards, acquiring depth, breadth, and height as outward discharge was blocked." Destructiveness and aggressive cruelty have therefore been turned inwards against the self. Using himself as a point of departure for his generalisations, he failed to reason his way back to personal particularity.

In *Twilight of the Idols* (1888) he asks whether the wisest men of each period are all moribund. Does wisdom appear on earth like a raven attracted by the smell of carrion? He accuses Socrates and Plato of being symptoms of decay, agents of dissolution, anti-Greek, negative in their relation to life. Socrates, who was as ugly and decadent, he says, as a typical criminal, admitted to all the evil appetites, but claimed to have mastered them. Did "this shrewdest of self-deceivers" ever understand that "having to combat one's own instincts is the formula for decadence"? But did Nietzsche not understand that he had himself been following this formula? In the preface to *Ecce Homo* he claims that he is both a decadent and the opposite. The typical decadent chooses what is disadvantageous for him, but Nietzsche had refused to let himself be cared for, had chosen solitude. Though this could, by his own definition, be interpreted as evidence of decadence, he adduced it as proof that he had known how to cure himself. "From the perspective of illness to *healthier* concepts and values, and, conversely, from the fullness and self-confidence of a *rich* life to the covert working of the instinct for decadence—this was my most continuous training, my most personal experience, which gave me mastery of this, if of anything."

Without ever quite focusing inwards on the "inner pollution," or questioning whether he might be revenging himself for it in his works, he punishes himself constantly, as if to expiate the crimes against humanity he is committing by failing to keep silent. "I want to make things as hard for myself as they have ever been for anybody: only under this pressure do I have a *clear* enough *conscience* to possess something few men have or have ever had—*wings*, so to speak." The wording is revealing: besides punishing himself, he wants to dissociate himself from the human species, rise above human nature.

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In his madness he signed some letters "Dionysus," and his final identification with the god is only the final stage in a Dionysiac cultivation of his own potential for insanity. Dionysus had been central to his thinking ever since he started working on the notes and lectures that prepared the ground for his first book *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872).

In an 1885 notebook he identified the Dionysian with "that acme of joy at which a man can feel apotheosised, can feel that Nature is justifying itself in him." But "the slaves of 'modern ideas'," the "children of a fragmented, pluralistic, sick, weird period" had lost that capacity for happiness without which the Greeks could not have participated in Dionysian festivals: the Greek soul had flourished without any need for conditions of morbid exaltation or madness. And in a notebook he kept from March to June 1888, the last year of his sanity, there are some definitions of the Dionysian. It is

> a drive towards unity, reaching beyond personality, the quotidian, society, reality, across the chasm of transitoriness: an impassioned and painful overflowing into darker, fuller, more buoyant states; an ecstatic affirmation of the totality of life as what remains constant—not less potent, not less ecstatic—throughout all fluctuation; the great pantheistic sharing of joy and distress which blesses and endorses even the ghastliest, the most questionable elements in life; the eternal will for regeneration, fruitfulness, recurrence; the awareness that creation and destruction are inseparable.

This is to identify the drive towards unity with a hankering for disintegration. Instead of postulating a self in which libidinous desires could unite harmoniously with higher aspirations, he becomes a latter-day worshipper of a god who is cut to pieces. In the myth the god is indestructible. After he has been dismembered, the parts are distributed into winds, water, earth, stars, planets, animals. But it is dangerous to emulate the god. This idea of distribution and dispersal was basic to Nietzsche's mental habits. He tried not to think in terms of identities but of forces. The stable identity of the ego disappears, and he was finally unable to differentiate between himself and other people, living or dead.

If we could discount the probability of organic disease, we could enquire whether his insanity was the outcome of rejecting identity and logic. If the old distinctions between truth and falsehood are invalid, if there is no reality except in appearance, no coherent self behind the voice that speaks or the mind that thinks or the body that desires, how can we keep any anchorage in lucidity? If we believe that every belief is

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false, does the concept of sanity still have any meaning? The case of Nietzsche raises a number of problems which could not be resolved by study of the case history, even if all the medical facts were available. And, as it is, the aetiology of the malaise and the madness are likely to remain problematic. Of the specialists in venereal disease that I have consulted, the majority considers it probable that he did contract syphilis in about 1865. If *paresis* or *dementia paralytica* was to ensue, as it often did, a time lag of twenty-three years would have been unusually but not impossibly long, while gradual loss of brain tissue would have brought the delusions of grandeur that insidiously but progressively invaded Nietzsche's conversation, letters, and books in the last few years before the breakdown. It is extremely unlikely that the paralysis did not have syphilitic origins. Alfred Adler noticed that in paretics unconscious instincts often rise freely to consciousness, not being held back by their cultural ideals. This causes violent changes of mood. As Freud said, paretics could go on achieving extraordinary artistic results, as Maupassant did, until shortly before collapse. The loosening process resulting from paresis "gave Nietzsche the capacity for the quite extraordinary achievement of seeing through all layers and recognising them at the very base (of everything). In that way he placed his paretic disposition at the service of science." (*Minutes of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society.*)

In August 1886, when he wrote a new preface for the second part of *Human All Too Human,* his mind was not yet seriously unbalanced, though he implied that he had won the battle against his lifelong malaise. "One should speak only when one cannot remain silent, and only about what one has conquered . . . The man who is suffering has as yet no right to pessimism." Addressing himself to

> those who have the hardest time of it, you rare spirits, the most jeopardised, most intellectual, bravest spirits, who must be the *conscience* of the modern soul, and as such must be possessed of its *consciousness,* concentrating all the disease, poison, and danger that only modern times could have produced—you whose lot it is to be more diseased than any individual if only because you are not mere individuals

he was obviously describing what he felt himself to be. The book he wrote in the summer of 1887, *The Genealogy of Morals,* is among his two or three best. But by February 1888, he was liable, in his letters, to launch into self-praise as extravagant as that in *Ecce Homo*: "It is not inconceivable that I am the foremost philosopher of the era, perhaps

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even somewhat more, a bridge between two millennia, decisive and doom-laden." According to Freud, the sustained mastery of form in *Ecce Homo* indicates that the work is fully valid, but, nervous of being influenced by Nietzsche, he had been scrupulous not to read much of his writing. To those familiar with the earlier books, the change in manner of self-assertion is unmistakable. In April, replying to Georg Brandes's request for biographical information, Nietzsche felt either free to depart from the facts or unable to distinguish between fact and fantasy: he said he had been born "on the battlefield of Lützen"; the first name he had heard spoken was Gustavus Adolphus; his ancestors were Polish aristocrats called Niezky; outside Germany he was usually taken for a Pole; he had been an officer in the artillery. Writing to an American journalist in June, he called *Zarathustra* "the profoundest work in the German language," and his books "in the front rank by virtue of the richness of the psychological experience, the courage in face of the greatest dangers and their sublime frankness." In September, writing a preface for the *Revaluation of All Values*, which he was never to complete, he said: "This book belongs to the very few. Perhaps none of them are alive yet . . . Only the day after tomorrow belongs to me. Some men are born posthumously." (A businessman in the same advanced phase of neurosyphilis would have been liable to over invest, working under the delusion that his assets were far greater than they in fact were.) Settling in Turin for the winter, Nietzsche was euphoric. "Everywhere I am given the most distinguished treatment. If only you could see how pleased everyone here is when I arrive, and how in all quarters they involuntarily bring the best, the most tactful parts of their nature to the fore, putting on their best, their most considerate manners." He enjoyed his food more than ever before, took more trouble over his appearance. A letter to his sister was signed "Your Brother, now *quite a great person*." On his forty-fourth birthday, 15 October 1888, he heard from none of his friends except Gast, but adopting, as he was, more and more insane strategies to achieve self-sufficiency, he celebrated single-handed by starting *Ecce Homo*. Some critics regard it as one of his best books, but it is full of what he had once called "the noisiness of self-applause," and full of indications that his mind was already unbalanced. In claiming to be the first immoralist, he also claims the right to indulge his pleasure in destroying, and his powers of destruction. "I obey my Dionysian nature which does not know how to separate negation from affirmation." By the end of the year he was manically convinced that nothing was beyond his powers: "The most unheard of tasks are easy as a game; my health like the

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weather, coming up daily with boundless brilliance and assurance. The world will be inverted for the next few years: since the old god has abdicated, I shall be ruling the world."

On 3 January 1889, he collapsed in the Piazza Carlo Alberto after embracing a horse that a cabdriver was beating. He was carried back to his lodgings, where he wrote several letters, and during the next few days he went on writing letters, which have been published, but after being interned in the Basel asylum on 10 January, he wrote nothing which has been considered publishable, though he survived until 1900. He was transferred to the asylum at Jena a week later, and released in March 1890. He lived with his mother until she died in 1897, and then with his sister, Elisabeth. The four pages of childlike scrawl I found in the archive at Weimar probably date from the first half of 1892. One of the many strange features about the cryptic, discontinuous sentences is that when he used the first person he was not referring to himself, but performing a harshly critical ventriloquism, with either his mother or his sister as object. "Only where did the illness in the family come from? For little Marie was indeed a very strong girl and the Herr Pastor even more so. I got to know him at the wedding. They used to say it always fell on the fourth child." "Marie" must refer to his mother, and he seems to have been harbouring a morbid suspicion that she had had an incestuous affair with her brother Edmund, pastor at Gorenzen.

> Edmund *heartily* loved both your good children and loved the Bl wife so much he was now another guardian of our Fritz and more Indeed he was declared incurable at the Court by Professor Binzwanger and from that moment on I had no peace in being able at least to look after him myself Well when he applied for the lodgings I had my fun with him finding out whether he was engaged all the ones that came to me were either engaged or got engaged and then he said I've had my fingers burned so I prefer not to move in Do they have children? Do you remember when I said uninvited guests have to stand in the corner It was too much grief for a mother's heart was it not she has another three children? of her own He is so similar to him in character too so gently dignified they could both control themselves so well

At the same time he was capable of a much more sympathetic identification with the old lady, even if he was aware that on one level of consciousness she had welcomed the circumstances that had made it possible for her to repossess him, to become as indispensable to him as when he was an infant. "Otherwise he feels abandoned But the love for me has also remained Already he has become too accustomed to me

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again It makes it so difficult for me to say goodbye. It is better here but when one can still do something to help and here I can."

When Elisabeth is the subject, the insane ventriloquism is unambivalently hostile. She had been living in Paraguay with her anti-Semitic husband, Bernhard Förster, who had founded an Aryan colony. "*As mother of the colony* I still have so much to do for all the colonists! That is the main pleasure for Fritz I am monstrously good. I do not know whether I am leaving my husband's work in the lurch." And Nietzsche, whom she still called Fritz, is probably mimicking her when he writes: "For me everything was over a long time ago, what I have lost I have lost. Only if my private property increases in value will I be able to recover the greater part of my capital. Money is nothing to me! God has always helped me! And I am very *glad* to give."

On these four pages all the references to himself are in the second person or the third. "Always great things expected from you." "Loyal, loyal, loyal." "He is very pleased to have visits He is often livelier, it varies Today is a quiet day . . . He recognises voices from old times. Always kindly and pleasant." "He has always been so *noble*."

No one could seriously doubt that these are the words of a madman, but only two years earlier his two closest friends, visiting him at the Jena clinic, had both entertained serious doubts about whether he was really mad. "I almost had the impression," wrote Peter Gast, "that his mental disturbance consists of no more than a heightening of the humorous antics he used to put on for an intimate circle of friends . . . it seemed—horrible though this is—as if Nietzsche were merely feigning madness, as if he were glad for it to have ended in this way." And a month later Franz Overbeck wrote: "I cannot escape the ghastly suspicion . . . that his madness is simulated. This impression can be explained only by the experiences I have had of Nietzsche's self-concealment, of his spiritual masks." Apparently neither of them remembered what he had written in *Dawn* about ancient Greeks who feigned madness or prayed for delirium. Perhaps there is a histrionic element in all madness and a voluntary element in all breakdowns, and even if a twenty-three-year-old syphilitic infection was the cause of Nietzsche's madness, Overbeck was not wrong when he said that his friend had "lived his way towards it."

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Vadim Belotserkovsky

THE RUSSIAN NATIONALIST OPPOSITION

The world took note of the Russian nationalist opposition only after the appearance of the nationalist writings of Solzhenitsyn. Although Russian nationalism had emerged in the mid-sixties, the activity of small nationalist groups was overshadowed by the democratic human rights movement. Warmed by the light of Solzhenitsyn's fame, the Russian nationalists moved into the foreground, at the same time making clear their hostility to the democratic movement.

Émigré groups too (the National Labor Union, Russian Student Christian Movement, etc.) removed the democratic camouflage from their nationalist banners. In 1976, the extreme right-wing journal *Chasovoy* announced through a recent émigré that the nationalist movement—or as Udodov put it, "the popular monarchical movement"—is "by no means weaker than the 'democratic movement' which is noisily publicized in the West." *Chasovoy*'s editor adds that the democratic movement "has been fostered by foreign countries, with the aid of foreign capital, and exists almost exclusively in Jewish circles."

Thus the Russian nationalist opposition declared itself an advocate of Great Russia and an adversary of democracy and the Jews. The declarations of nationalist groups smell of the fire of pogroms, Russian messianism, and a "new order" for the "decaying" West, as a selection from nationalist utterances demonstrates:

> A strong personality and the cult of the hero are the basis and essence of freedom and culture. It is not surprising that Western democracy, which denies the cult of the hero, proves deeply anti-human and anti-culture . . .
>
> But false prophets come to us walking on dry land. "God is not the God of Russians but of the whole world," they say . . . But their words are a lie . . . Let the Russian God come to the salvation of the world!
>
> Democratic institutions do not bring healing; on the contrary, they aggravate the disease. . . . But we strive for the revival of nationalist

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> feeling in an intermixed world, strive to have everyone become aware of his personal responsibility to nation and to race . . . Disorderly hybridization must be stopped.
>
> We cannot remain silent when the extreme increase in danger from the organized forces of large-scale Zionism and Satanism has become obvious to all . . . Many of these blasphemers and destroyers of our national, cultural, and spiritual values have now found shelter in Zionist centers in countries of the West, especially the U.S. . . . world Zionism is conducting an insidious struggle against our government both from without and from within.

I think this is enough. Nationalism in a people who as a nation are oppressed by no one, and who are also in the position of oppressor, is absurd and can only take the form of chauvinism and extreme reaction. Dissidents among the national minorities and republics of the USSR of course reacted sharply to the appearance of the Russian nationalist opposition, but with an intensification of anti-Russian feeling! Solzhenitsyn and Shafarevich anxiously warn that the overheating of national passions within the country may end in bloodshed. And they are right; but after they advanced their nationalist ideas, the heat rose still higher and the country moved toward the abyss of slaughter between its peoples; at the present time, any crisis could easily push it over the brink.

The implications may be summarized by an anecdote which a Ukranian nationalist recently told me. "You assure us," he said, "that most Russians harbor no chauvinist feeling in their hearts. Well, that may be true of men like Solzhenitsyn and Maksimov, but what about Amalrik? He was a Westernizer, democrat, anti-imperialist, even a Russophobe. But as soon as he left the Soviet Union he declared that in his heart he was closer to the Russian nationalists, and couldn't restrain tears of pride reading Lermontov's lines, 'From the Urals to the great river Danube, the troops move swaying and shining. . . .' In his mind, he said, he understood that the troops were moving to do something bad, like the occupation of Czechoslovakia, but in his heart he couldn't help being proud. This is the same sort of thing we heard from the Germans," my companion continued. "In their minds, they said, they criticized Nazism, Hitler; but when they recalled how the German troops moved 'swaying and shining' from Normandy to the Volga, they couldn't help feeling pride!"

This conversation prompted me to analyze the roots, nature, and magnitude of the Russian nationalist movement and to assess the dangers it may pose. But first a disclaimer: because elementary free-

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doms, including the freedom for sociological research, are lacking in the USSR, judgments about its society and people can only be approximate, based on selected data, the breadth and objectivity of which depend on the personal experience of the researcher and many other circumstances. With a question like nationalism, however, sociology is not reliable either. Only history can judge.

On the basis of my experience, I have come to believe that at the present time there are three Russian nations. The first is the peasantry, which now constitutes about twenty-five percent of the Russian ethnic population of the USSR and is rapidly decreasing on account of migration to the cities and the industrialization of agriculture. I know little about the attitude of the peasants to the question of nationalism, but it is clear that the social and political future of Russia and the USSR will not depend on the village.

The second nation consists of people from the sphere of service, commerce, the trades—low-level white-collar workers, and blue-collar workers in service industries. For brevity I call this the service sector. Its proportion is about twenty percent, but is bound to increase.

The third nation is made up of workingmen, technicians, engineers, and industrial office workers. The proportion is about fifty percent, not counting workers in the service industries or agriculture. This sector is increasing and although its overall growth is bound to slow down, the growth of the engineering group within it will continue to accelerate.

Of these groups, the most important is the "factory nation"—the workers and engineers. In the USSR this sector has a solidarity it possesses nowhere else, the result of long-standing and specifically Soviet conditions. The factory engineers and technicians come mainly from the working milieu. They live in almost identical conditions and are not better off than the workers (rather worse), and they are subject to even greater exploitation because they have more responsibility and are at the focal point of all the absurdities of the system, the center of authoritarian, bureaucratic anarchy. If anything distinguishes the factory engineers from the workers, it is a greater dissatisfaction with the system. Of course the factory engineers are better educated. In sum, the engineers and technicians simultaneously make the sector as a whole intellectual and radicalize it.

The most important element in the consciousness of the people of this sector seems to me to be their increasing understanding that authoritarianism cannot bring an effective and just social order. And factory people, like no one else, have an interest in order. For that

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reason, Andrei Amalrik is greatly mistaken if he is addressing the engineers and workers in *Will the Soviet Union Last Until 1984?* when he writes so scathingly that the Russian people associate freedom with anarchy. For engineers and factory workers, anarchy is already firmly associated with lack of freedom. The engineers and workers appear to me to be the main mass support for the democratic development of Russia as well as a number of other republics of the USSR where this sector is sufficiently large. The factory "nation" is drawing contemporary Russia irrevocably into industrial democratic Western civilization, although this does not of course mean complete convergence in their future development.

The factory sector today is the most healthy morally, having suffered least from totalitarianism. I quote here the opinion of Nadezhda Mandelstam, who knew the factory milieu well, and herself worked in factories as a weaver after her husband's arrest. With what warmth she recalls the people who surrounded her there! Although the "masses" always appear whenever an iron social order is established, she observes that the factory people, "in their everyday working lives, . . . remain true to their individual selves . . . they live their own completely human lives, not becoming mechanized or turning into 'masses.'" What sets this life apart is that there is no place in it for keen competition, and solidarity is essential. Since factory people are tightly built into the social structure because of their situation, they are usually disinclined to individualism and groundless utopianism. This limitation may narrow the horizons of thought, but it cuts down on extremism for the sake of standing out from the crowd.

The attitude towards nationalism in the factory milieu is determined both by the characteristics described above and by the fact that the factory "nation" is of many ethnic origins. In factory collectives one will meet people of the most diverse nationalities—the result of forced industrialization and a very difficult war, the compulsory and semivoluntary migration of the population in a multinational empire. These people do not remain isolated. They intermingle, they intermarry—in a word, they commit "disorderly hybridization." According to the data available to me, about half the families in major industrial centers of the RSFSR (Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic) are already binational. And this process is progressing. Hence the outcry of the nationalists: "Put an end to disorderly hybridization!" Indeed, they can hardly hope that a man who is either half-Russian himself or has a mixed family or halfbreed children,

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whose comrades and friends are of various nationalities, and who is long accustomed to all this, will suddenly begin to beat his breast and shout, "We are Russians! Russia for the Russians!" and the like.

There appear to be no serious problems of nationality, then, in the present factory milieu. The people themselves think very little about it; it does not concern them, and they have little information. It is somewhere in the background. Even Jews, both workers and engineers, seldom complain of anti-Semitism "from the side" or "from below." As Mandelstam observes, it always comes from above. "I never hid the fact that I am Jewish," she writes, "and I must say that among the ordinary people I have yet to encounter any anti-Semitism. In working-class families and among collective farmers, I was always treated as one of them."

But whereas the "factory nation" of engineers and workers is an outright babel, the highest authorities, the petty tyrants and exploiters, are purebred Russians almost to a man. They are not related to German emperors, are not Russified émigrés from Europe, do not serve foreign capital, and do not even speak French among themselves—they are past masters (according to an anecdote) of the "two basic Russian languages: bureaucratese and obscenity!"

The myth that Russians live poorer than everyone else in the USSR has little currency in the factory milieu, for the standard of living of workers in the RSFSR is higher on the whole than in the republics, especially if one takes into account housing, working conditions, vacations, availability of goods, opportunities for learning, medicine, and the degree of arbitrariness among the authorities. And since people in industry often go on official trips and also talk to newly arrived workers, they are well informed on conditions in other places. It is well known around the country that workers generally migrate from the national periphery to major industrial centers of the RSFSR and not vice versa. This fact is eloquent testimony to the location of better conditions for living and working.

Of course the workers know that the rural population is poorer in Russia than in many other republics, but they know that both the soil and climate of Russia are less favorable for agriculture, as a rule. In other areas where conditions are bad, the villages drag out an even more beggarly existence.

The so-called problem of the revival of Russian culture—and the real problem of the emancipation of culture from totalitarian oppression, which can be accomplished only under democratic conditions—

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troubles factory people very little. In brief, I do not see the factory milieu as a serious basis for Russian nationalism, but on the contrary, as a formidable obstacle to it.

The service sector is another matter. Under Soviet conditions this group is more alienated and demoralized than it has ever been anywhere. By "Soviet conditions" I mean not only totalitarianism, which deprives people of any possibility of unity (the engineers and workers are unified by the nature of their work), but state capitalism, under which the service and commerce sector is in the most dreadful position materially and morally. Here one finds the necessity for universal thievery in order to live, the most difficult working conditions, a lack of respect for service (in a country where "all work is honorable"), and much else besides. Privileged clients, the majority of whom are moral lackeys, have a demoralizing influence too. What could be worse than playing the lackey to lackeys! The service sector is also very ill educated. As a result, most of these people are simultaneously downtrodden and aggressive. Violent prejudices of all sorts are widespread: toward non-Russians and foreigners, intellectuals and students, motorists and tourists, and toward each other. The irritation caused by a difficult life spreads in all directions, and misanthropy develops. The nostalgia for a strong Stalinist authority is widespread in the service sector, where many people see it as a protection against the arbitrariness of their local petty tyrants.

Thus the existence of this sector makes Russian nationalism a cause for special anxiety. It is here that the movement could find fertile ground for new growth among the masses, although only if the authorities are interested in having that happen. By itself, this sector is so alienated and demoralized that it is utterly incapable of any independent action except hooliganism and thievery.

But why, how, and in what milieu did the Russian nationalist opposition emerge if, as would seem to be the case, it had no real cause? In fact there was a strong contraindication to its development, for official Great Russian nationalism ought to have evoked (and has for the majority) the opposite reaction for everyone antagonistic to the regime.

We find one indication of cause in the dates of the movement, the fact that it emerged at the beginning of the sixties and reached its greatest flowering after 1968. The early sixties saw the collapse of illusions that the regime might be liberalized from above, while the period after 1968, when Soviet tanks invaded Prague, was a time of despair for all thinking people. This was also a time of harsh persecu-

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tion of the democratic movement. Finally, it was a time of emigration, which is both the symptom and consequence of hopelessness: the regime was proving sturdier and less decrepit than many people had expected.

When a social form exhausts the objective reason for its existence (in this case, to promote industrialization—which does not mean that industrialization could not have been achieved by some other system) but continues to exist, then pathological symptoms become inevitable. The emergence of the Russian nationalist opposition is one such phenomenon.

I do not think the nationalist opposition would have emerged if the process of liberalization and democratization—in which all politically active citizens had become involved, including many who are now Russian nationalists—had continued. This process would have accomplished both the emancipation and the purification of Russian culture. The democratically inclined intelligentsia had already begun to struggle against the falsification of Russian history, for the preservation of the best traditions and memorials of antiquity. And this was happening without any nationalist demagoguery, without reference to ethnic origins or the "Russian spirit."

Russian nationalist manifestos show attitudes and traits which indicate the causes and origins of the movement. They all express hatred of the intelligentsia. Although remarks critical of the Soviet intelligentsia are also found in samizdat works by writers with democratic leanings, such criticism does not take on the character of a phobia, as does the nationalist hostility to the educated, which is accompanied by anti-Semitism and xenophobia. The nationalists also share a dislike and incomprehension of democracy. Behind this hostility to democracy lies demophobia; for example, Osipov calls the contemporary Russian people a "lazy, indecisive, cowardly, bemired, and moribund nation," and Solzhenitsyn speaks of the "raving masses" and asks, "How is the nation to be preserved?" The "nation" here is an abstract nation of the future, and of the past (as they imagine it) when it was "spiritually healthy." Solzhenitsyn writes: "For a thousand years Russia lived with an authoritarian structure and up to the beginning of the twentieth century maintained her people in excellent spiritual health." The question arises whether "Russian nationalism" is not finally a pseudonym for something else—for other goals that have nothing to do with the Russian people. Non-Russian nationalism has no such scorn for its people as they really are today! Often accompanying these attitudes is open nostalgia for Stalinism

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and the desire for a strong, authoritarian regime. The Russian nationalists display a totalitarian psychology in their intolerance of dissent, their dogmatism, and their distorted treatment of history.

Briefly then: the opposition nationalists either belong to the most demoralized part of the service sector, or are oriented to it, or are moving parallel to it, like the elite group that has formed around Solzhenitsyn which is represented in *From Under the Rubble.* Apart from this elite, the opposition nationalists are characterized by a lack of intellectual sophistication. They belong to the so-called semi-intelligentsia, which Montaigne characterized as a very dangerous phenomenon. Totalitarian state capitalism begets the semi-intelligentsia in profusion, and it comes mainly from the service sector. It owes its origin both to the low quality, hasty, almost compulsory "universal" education (primary and secondary) demanded by forced industrialization and propaganda, and to the characteristically pitiful position of the commerce and service sphere under state capitalism. As a consequence, people who according to their inclinations would have been, let us say, shop assistants, become journalists or even writers (as one well-known man of letters said of "writers" like Safronov and Alekseev). Mandelstam's perceptions, which antedate the appearance of organized nationalist opposition, are again germane: "It is always among the semieducated that fascism, chauvinism, and hatred for the intelligentsia most easily take root."

The nostalgia for Stalinism among opposition nationalists is explicable in terms of gains made by the service sector in the Stalinist era. This time was distinguished by a high rate of industrialization and development of the governmental apparatus, developments which gave mobility to the service sector and the semi-intelligentsia. Enterprising and ambitious young people from all sectors of society easily moved up the ladder through the hierarchy (including that of the party government). "Stalinist democracy," characterized by Stalin's mass purges, also facilitated this process: were one short of ability, he could help clear the way upward by means of denunciation. But by the sixties the mass purges had ceased, the pace had begun to slacken, a new intelligentsia had taken shape, and young personnel had begun to accumulate on the lower rungs of the hierarchical ladders. The number of service sector semi-intelligentsia who could not find a way to advance began growing. Intellectuals who occupied key posts treated the semi-intellectuals with scorn.

The Russian nationalist opposition now raised its banner (not without the aid of KGB and "hawk" careerists stuck on the higher

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rungs of the party ladder). People with other reasons and motives began to stand up: the despairing, the misanthropes, the undercover agents, the petty criminals (as a samizdat tape satirizes: "I'm sick and tired of the bandit's life. It's time to go over to the anti-Semites . . . "), and those who were simply faddists in pursuit of a new style. Everyone was fed up with the official ideology; not to be a dissident was tantamount to being an idiot. This way, however, you were in opposition and not prison camp! "Sincere" fanatics appeared, of course, ready to go to the stake for the idea (and ready to send others).

This opposition of the sixties had been preceded by an earlier "semiopposition." In 1957, frightened by events in Hungary, Krushchev had turned the helm to the right. Literary hacks and ignoramuses under the leadership of the "mad troika"—Kochetov, Gribachev, Safronov—decided that the time had come to clear the literary ladder of the mass of "revisionists and Zionists," i.e., all the real writers warmed by Krushchev's "thaw." The hacks united and signed a collective denunciation and appeal to the top officials, demanding a purge. A copy of the denunciation, in the form of a series of articles by Safronov entitled "Asleep and Awake" was published in *Literaturnaya gazeta,* whose chief editor at the time was Kochetov. The articles contained a list of proscribed writers. All those named in the denunciation were expecting a call in the night, or, for a start, expulsion from the Writer's Union. But Krushchev took thought, stopped the campaign (which of course had not been begun without aid from someone on high), and gave the denouncers a light rap on the knuckles. Kochetov was even forced to leave *Literaturnaya gazeta* "by his own wish." The aggrieved denouncers—Kochetov, Shevtsov, and the others—sat down to write their now famous lampoon, saturated with hatred for the pro-Jewish and pro-West intelligentsia, which had seized "all" key posts and was hostile to everything Russian. Of course their covert purpose was agitation against the party leadership, which could not bring itself to finish off its enemies as Stalin would have.

That was how the semiopposition Russian nationalist movement came into being. It was a "semi" opposition because the participants were already on the rungs of the career ladder and did not want to risk too much and fall off. They then seized the journals *Molodaya gvardia* and *Nash sovremennik,* grouped themselves around the Society for the Preservation of Monuments of Antiquity, created a "Russian Club," and received support from Safronov's journal *Ogonyok* and Kochetov's *Oktyabr.* All this of course was accomplished with the aid of the "national-Bolshevists" (as they then began to be called) at the very top.

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Nationalist opposition groups arose later in the mid-sixties. As a rule they consist of semi-intelligentsia who have not yet occupied any rungs of the ladder. And although they are slightly more open and radical, they constantly declare their loyalty to the authorities, do not attack the authoritarian structure of the regime, and do not support but attack the democratic movement. The main difference between them and the semiopposition nationalists in the upper echelon is their religiosity: they believe that Russian nationalism cannot be separated from Orthodoxy—more precisely, from Pan-Orthodoxy.

The characteristic feature of both nationalist factions is their small size. In their best times, documents of the nationalists were signed by approximately a dozen people. Solzhenitsyn unintentionally shows how insignificant the numerical base of Russian authoritarian nationalism is when he declares that "Among Soviet people whose opinions do not conform to the official stereotype, there is a well-nigh general view that what our society needs . . . is freedom and the multiparty system. The adherents of this view include all the supporters of socialism, but it is also more widely held than that . . . This almost perfect unanimity is an example of our traditional passive imitation of the West."

If the strength of the upper echelon faction of nationalism derives only from the support of the regime, then that of the lower echelon derives from the support of Solzhenitsyn's authority . . . and the regime's as well! The history of the journal *Veche*, the sole periodical organ of the lower echelon nationalists, illustrates the movement's relationship to the regime and shows its course.

In 1971–1973, when the KGB was waging an especially furious attack on the human rights movement and its main organ *Khronika tekushchikh sobytiy* and was arresting or expelling from the country everyone suspected of participation in the *Khronika*, *Veche* calmly continued to appear. In 1975, Osipov, the editor of *Veche*, suddenly circulated an announcement that the KGB was preparing a provocation against him. Soon a declaration came from all members of the editorial board of *Veche*, under the leadership of Ovchinnikov, that Osipov had been expelled from the editorial board for "immorality and intrigue." Ovchinnikov was "chosen" editor, and put out one last number of *Veche*, without Osipov. Osipov, with a small number of friends, made an announcement that the board's action against him was inspired by the KGB and that Ovchinnikov was a former KGB agent. And this was true. The only thing Osipov did not say was how he could have worked with Ovchinnikov. In the fifties, Ovchinnikov

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had been in hiding in the West, had worked a year and a half at Radio Liberation (now Liberty), and had then deserted back and come out with an exposé of the activity of the imperialists, the CIA, Radio Liberation, and so on. Commentary, as they say, is superfluous.

After his expulsion from *Veche*, Osipov founded a new journal, *Zemlya*, with the aid of Rodionov. He put out two issues, but after his arrest *Zemlya* too ceased to exist. And the activity of remaining nationalist groups was also reduced to nothing, "of its own accord." The elite group fell silent soon after Solzhenitsyn's expulsion.

Why did the authorities disperse the nationalist opposition? Possibly they had become embarrassed before the West, crushing only Democrats; and maybe also before nationalist party adherents in the republics as well. "You let our nationalists rot in the camps, but you don't touch your own!" The authorities evidently decided to cope with the task of kindling anti-Semitism themselves, by methods which are familiar to us all by now.

Vladimir Bukovsky, responding not long ago to the question of why the Soviet authorities cannot crush the human rights movement, compared it to an iceberg, the underwater part of which is hidden in broad strata of the intelligentsia (primarily, I would add, the scientific and technical stratum: most people active in the movement are physicists, mathematicians, etc.). The nationalist movement, by contrast, can be compared to gobs of silt which have been torn from the mired bottom of society and are floating to the surface. Being decayed matter, this silt is seldom able to float on top without help—a fact, I repeat, which does not exclude the danger of its being stirred up in the event of some "earthquake," again with the aid of the powerful machine of the authorities.

The nationalist movements in the republics are another matter. These reflect and defend genuine national interests and for that reason are, like the human rights movement, comparable to an iceberg and thus ineradicable, although the force and harshness of the repressive measures directed against them exceed the force of the measures directed against the democratic movement in the RSFSR. A large proportion of political prisoners in the USSR are activists in the national movements of non-Russian republics.

The strength of the human rights movement in the RSFSR is explained, incidentally, both by its multinational character and by its collaboration with the national-democratic movements in the republics. The Russian nationalists are of course irreconcilably hostile to other "nationalists."

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In my view, the main cause for emergence of the Russian nationalist opposition has been the stagnation of the regime and its concurrent stability. The nationalist opposition basically represents a rebellion of the semi-intelligentsia, a group drawn largely from the service sector, against the intelligentsia and the senile partocracy, which is incapable of reviving the dynamism of the regime either by democratization or by re-Stalinization, thus opening "the way up" for the semi-intelligentsia. Nevertheless, the service sector has a potential ally in the partocracy.

The danger then is this: in the event of some acute crisis, the regime could lapse into open neo-Nazism, perhaps with an admixture of Orthodox clericalism—in other words, into total senility. Neo-Nazism would not save the regime, but might prolong its existence and produce new victims. In this case a military venture would also be possible.

I should like to stress that such dangers are not great. The crux of the problem Russian nationalism presents at the present time is that it divides the people and thereby works to the advantage of the regime and to the detriment of the multinational democratic movement, which alone is capable of offering a radical and humane solution to the major problems of the USSR, including the problem of nationality.

Translated by Susan Brownsberger

We regret the death of

JAMES T. FARRELL,

an early contributor to

Partisan Review.

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STORY

Walter Abish

THE IDEA OF SWITZERLAND

1.
A glorious German summer.
Oh, absolutely.
Easily the most glorious summer of the past thirty-three years.
Thirty-three years? Oh, I agree.

When my father Ulrich von Hargenau was executed by a firing squad in 1944, his last words were: Long live Germany. At least, that's what I have been told by my family. He was killed in July 1944. What was the summer of 1944 like? Active. Certainly, active.

One runs little or no danger in speaking of the weather, or writing about the weather, or in repeating what others may have said on that subject. It is safe to conclude that people discussing the weather may be doing so in order to avoid a more controversial subject, one that might irritate, annoy, or even anger someone, anyone, within earshot. I am past avoiding risks. Just a few weeks after my return from Paris I narrowly avoided being killed on a deserted street by the driver of a yellow Porsche. It was a beautiful summer's day, and I was thinking of getting started on my new book, the one that is based on my stay in Paris. I am convinced that the driver of the Porsche had intended to kill or maim me for life. Yes, definitely. I was going to be put out of action. There's little risk in writing this. I did not recognize the driver, whose face I saw for only a split second. It was not an unattractive face. It was a German face, like mine. A determined and somewhat obdurate face, a face that Dürer might have taken a fancy to, and painted or sketched. Consider yourself lucky, said a passerby, after having helped me to my feet. He took it for granted that I spoke German. He also, I assume, took it for granted that it was all an accident, just as I took it for granted that it was not.

You really ought to take greater precautions, said my brother Helmut, when I mentioned the incident. And why on earth did you decide to return to Würtenburg, in the first place?

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Because I was tired of hearing everyone around me speak only in French, I replied flippantly.

Well, try not to take too many risks.

The Hargenaus are not known for their humor. But then my brother might say: What's so funny about getting your head smashed in.

2.

What is my brother saying?

You should never have married Paula.

I was crazy about her.

If our father wasn't a bloody hero, and your name wasn't Hargenau, you'd be doing ten to fifteen behind bars. Maybe they'd permit you to have a typewriter, he added as an afterthought.

My brother has not yet had an opportunity to design a house of detention, as it is now called euphemistically, but he has designed a large assembly plant for Druck Electronics, an airport in München, a library and civic center in Heilbronn, another factory for Stüppen Plumbing, and at least half a dozen apartment buildings and three or four office buildings in addition to the new police station and post office in Würtenburg. He has also designed the house in the country where he and his family spend most of their weekends and their vacation each summer. I admit he works harder than I do. He works incessantly, spending at least a quarter of his work day on the phone. He never loses his temper. He is never impatient. He takes after my father.

As I was leaving my brother after spending a weekend with him and his family, he said: we must get together, you and I. We really must sit down and discuss things. I didn't have the heart to tell him that there wasn't anything left to discuss. At one time, years ago, we had our differences; now they hardly matter. I don't even remember what they were. Perhaps I had been envious of the success that he took for granted. He expected it. He was a Hargenau. He confided to me that if our father hadn't been such a complacent and self-assured aristocrat, he might have made a better conspirator. At least he was shot, instead of being left to dangle from a meat hook in front of a film crew recording the event.

Helmut rises each morning at 6:30. By 7:10 the entire family is at

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the table having breakfast. No one is ever late for breakfast. The children watch my brother intently. They wait for him to signal what kind of a day they can expect. He looks at his watch and purses his lips. He has two important business meetings first thing in the morning. He confides everything to Maria. She is blonde and blue eyed like him. She faces him squarely across the table. She informs him how she intends to spend the day. Nothing is too trivial to be omitted. The children listen intently. They are seeing at first hand the life of an adult world unfold. It is a real world. Each day their father contributes something tangible to the world. Each day several buildings all over Germany rise by another few feet and come closer to the completion that initially had its roots, so to speak, in his brain. By now, the entire Hargenau family knows their architectural history, backwards and forward. They know how an architect must proceed with his work by cajoling, reasoning, and reassuring his uneasy and nervous clients. The children gaze into Helmut's blue eyes and are reassured. The English suit speaks for itself. At quarter to eight he's at the wheel of his car. The children admire him. His wife admires him. His secretary admires him. His colleagues admire him grudgingly. His draftsmen admire him. His clients more than admire him, they attempt to emulate his relaxed approach to anything that may come up. What they all see is a tall, blond, blue-eyed man wearing a well-tailored English suit, preferably a plaid suit, and a solid-colored knit tie that is several shades darker than the button-down shirt. He shakes hands with a firm dry grip. He never perspires. Not even on TV with the bright floodlights focused on him. Perfectly at ease, he addresses the TV audience, the vast German audience, discussing his favorite subject, architecture. The splendid history of architecture. Greece, Rome, Byzantium, a slow parade of architectural achievement culminating in the new police station in Würtenburg. Most of Würtenburg tunes in to listen to my brother, amazed at the riches he presents for their appreciation, the architectural riches in their immediate vicinity, the riches of genius. Helmut Hargenau, he's something else, they say, shaking their heads in amazement.

And his brother Ulrich?

Best not talk about him. One never knows who may be listening.

3.

On my desk is a small framed photograph of my father, taken in his study. In the background hangs a drawing by Dürer. In the lapel of his jacket is a tiny swastika. The photograph was taken in the summer of 1941, a good summer for Germany. Next to the photograph of my

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father is one of Paula, my former wife, Paula who calmly informed me that some of our friends had stashed a couple of cases of World War II hand grenades in the cellar. She said it quite casually, as if they were cases of champagne. I in turn admired her incredible coolness and courage. Like my father who removed the swastika in 1942, she believed in causes, and temporary solutions.

Now that I know where she is, why don't I make an effort to get in touch with her?

Answer.

Answer immediately.

4.

A glorious summer. A glorious German summer.

Repeat.

Sometimes I feel as if the brain has become addicted to repetitions, needing to hear everything repeated once, then twice, in order to be certain that the statement is not false or misleading. I find myself repeating to myself what I intend to do next, even though I would be the first to acknowledge that repetition precludes the attainment of perfection, or, as the American philosopher Whitehead puts it: Perfection does not invite repetition.

My brain says: repeat.

The summer this year is really quite exceptional. It is almost (take note of the *almost*) perfect. Not too hot during the daytime, and not too cool at night. I may be imagining this, but the satisfied looks on the faces of the people I see daily must reflect, I am convinced, their contentedness with the weather and, in turn, with their pleasant and harmonious surroundings and, in turn, with their more or less amiable friends and relatives and in turn, with the intimate affairs that are now and then bound to occur, particularly when the person in question is not overly hampered by discontent, or some emotional disturbance, something that might impair his or her ability to judge people, and, among other things, to respond correctly to a sexual overture when it is made.

I met Paula in the Englischer Garten in Munich. I was bleeding slightly from a cut I had received when a policeman punched me in the face at the public rally in which a group of my friends and I had participated. Have you ever felt the temptation to blow up a police station, she asked me. I just laughed at the time.

You've taken leave of your senses, said Helmut in his pompous

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and condescending manner, when I mentioned that I intended to marry Paula. Father would have admired her guts, I said. He had a lot of guts, but little else, said Helmut, otherwise he would have headed for Switzerland. Helmut had met Paula only for several hours. What was it that he could discern in her that I failed to see?

Answer.

Answer immediately.

The characters in my books can be said to be free of emotional disturbances, free of emotional impairments. They meet here and there, in parks or public rallies and, without spending too much time analyzing their own needs, allow their brains a brief respite, as they embrace each other in bed. You're a pretty good lover, but are you able to blow up a police station, asked Paula.

What constitutes an emotional impairment?

An inner turmoil, an absence of serenity, an unresolved entanglement, self-doubt, self-hatred may be due to nothing more serious than a person's inability to appreciate the idyllic weather.

In this instance it is the perfect weather in Würtenburg and its immediate surroundings. Now, at this moment, along with the entire population of Würtenburg (approximately 125,968 according to the latest census), I am experiencing the fine weather. I am completely relaxed and have nothing but the weather on my mind. I do not expect ever to hear from Marie-Jean Filebra, or from my former wife, Paula Hargenau, the one, I assume, still in Paris, the other now free to go wherever she chooses.

Repeat.

The brain keeps persisting that it can survive on images alone.

Helmut, on meeting me at the airport on my return from Paris, promptly informed me that Paula was living in Geneva. He seemed put out when I burst into laughter, uncontrollable laughter. Geneva? What is she doing in Geneva? He smiled awkwardly, then shrugged his shoulders. I guess she's fond of the place.

Paula. In Geneva. Impossible.

Apparently I was mistaken. I still don't know what she's up to in Geneva, and have no intention of inquiring. I wouldn't want to

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embarrass her with my questions, my interest, or my presence. I am happy that she is free.

I am not hiding in Würtenburg. I am listed in the phone directory. If my former friends wish to locate me they can easily do so. Each morning I go out for the paper. In the afternoon, around four, I take a walk. Each morning, each afternoon, more or less at the same time. In that respect I present no problem for anyone who would wish to kill me. The man in the Porsche could give it another try.

Frequently, two or three times a week, I receive a letter from some anonymous person who appears to hate me with a greater passion and intensity than I have ever been able to hate anyone. Are all these letters written by lunatics? I could, I suppose, hand them over to the police; instead I toss them into a drawer of my desk.

Maria, my sister-in-law, calls me every three or four days. She asks me how my work is progressing. She tries to elicit from me what I am writing. Is it autobiographical? she asks.

Existence does not take place within the skin, I reply, quoting Klude.

Nonsense.

Only Maria is able to put me on the defensive by saying: nonsense.

It's true.

Repeat.

I am telling you the absolute truth.

5.

A young earnest-faced woman moved into the empty apartment on the floor above mine. I helped her carry a few heavy cartons of books to the elevator, since the doorman was on his lunch hour. Würtenburg is gradually emerging from its medieval past to which we are still so attached . . . the medieval past that is etched on so many of the faces of the people who live here. My brother and I are no exception. I gravely stare at my face in the mirror and see Germany's entire past.

A stranger, a young earnest-faced American, for instance, cannot help when visiting Würtenburg but see the world of Albrecht Dürer come to life. Dürer becomes his or her point of reference, or perhaps even guide, as he or she takes a leisurely walk down the main street past the cathedral designed by Müse-Haft Toll, with its frescoes by Alfredo Igloria Grobart and stained glass windows by Nacklewitz Jahn and then past the World War I monument on the left, a bronze riderless

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horse rearing up on its hind legs, the four metal tables on its granite base bearing the names of those killed in action. There are at least six Hargenau's, all officers, who died in World War I, and another half a dozen (my father's name not included) whose names are carved into the large slab of marble now standing, after a heated public debate, behind the Schottendorferkirche, a somewhat out-of-the-way part of the city, considered at the time by many as a more suitable spot for a World War II monument. After turning right at the public library it is only a five-minute brisk walk to the University where old Klude is still teaching philosophy. Or, should one say, is once again teaching philosophy after an enforced period of idleness, the result of too many reckless speeches in the thirties and early forties, speeches that dealt with the citizen's responsibilities to the New Order. Poor Klude. Once he stopped dealing with abstract theories and was able to make himself understood to one overcrowded gymnasium of students after another, the ideas he expressed were reinforced by statements such as: We have completely broken with a landless and powerless thinking. But by now Klude's former platitudinous speeches have been forgotten. His students swear by him, and his classes are always crowded. Sometimes as many as 400 sit in a large drafty auditorium, listening attentively to Klude as he lectures on the meaning of a thing. What is a thing? he asks rhetorically. Klude is not referring to a particular thing. He is not, for instance, referring to a modern apartment building, or a metal frame window, or an English lesson, but the *thingliness* that is intrinsic to all things, regardless of their merit, their usefulness, and the degree of their perfection. I mention the latter only because the mind is so created that it habitually sets up standards of perfection for everything: for marriage and for driving, for love affairs and for garden furniture, for table tennis and for gas ovens, for faces and even for something as petty as the weather, and then, having established these standards, it sets up standards of comparison which serve, if nothing else, to confirm in our minds that a great many things are less than perfect.

6.
My brain relies on words to describe my promising future. A future filled with expectation. A future built on the words I manage to put on paper. The words in themselves would not necessarily bewilder the doorman who daily greets me with: Looks like another fine day.

Repeat.

For all I know the doorman may have been one of the squad who shot my father. It is highly unlikely. And if he had, he was under

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orders. If you're part of an execution squad, you can't pick the people you want to shoot. Or can you?

It is a glorious day, and I wouldn't want to be anywhere else in the world.

I am convinced that my feelings are echoed by the people now casually walking down the Hauptstrasse, stopping now and then to gaze briefly into a shopwindow, looking at the things that are on display, sometimes peering into the interior of the store to see if they can spot a familiar face, no doubt a German face, a Dürer-like face of an acquaintance or friend.

Daphne, the earnest-faced American woman, was walking back to the apartment building, her arms wrapped around a large shopping bag filled with groceries, when I ran into her. I offered to help, but she wouldn't hear of it. I then suggested that we have dinner together. She allowed a few seconds to spell out the silence of rejection. She was too busy, she explained. She was trying to put her place into some kind of order.

Well, yes, I nodded sympathetically. How about joining me for a walk this afternoon. I was afraid that I was about to burden her with the responsibility of having to reject my second invitation. But she accepted.

Why on earth should I wish to spend an hour or two together with this earnest-faced young woman. Is it because I desperately need someone to talk to, someone who does not instantaneously recognize the name Hargenau. Ulrich von Hargenau, the elder, executed after an ill-fated attempt to kill the Führer, and Ulrich Hargenau, the younger, witness for the defense in the recent conspiracy trial of the Einzig Gruppe. Why doesn't someone ask me what I think of the Einzig Gruppe.

Assholes. A bunch of assholes with hand grenades that had been stored in the cellar of the house where Paula and I lived, until we went our separate ways.

What do you really want? Paula had once asked me.

Redistribution of wealth, I said instantaneously.

No. What do you really want?

Success, I said cautiously.

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No. Not success. What do you really really want?

Why not success?

You're terribly devious, did you know that.

No.

If only I knew what you really wanted I would be able to trust you, she said.

You can trust me.

No.

7.

By now I like to think that most people in Würtenburg have put me out of their minds. My somewhat inept performance in court as reported widely in all the papers and on TV and radio has fortunately been superseded by more recent events. An earthquake in Chile, a famine in Ethiopia, a coup d'état in Tanzania, widespread use of torture in Latin America and Greece. Once in a while, one of my wife's former friends, a fellow activist, now serving ten to twenty, or was it fifteen to thirty years for a long list of alleged crimes, including: arson, assault, kidnapping, armed robbery, and second degree murder, will go on a hunger strike and receive mention in the papers. But no one is really interested in my whereabouts. No one could possibly care what I plan to write next. I expect that a number of people familiar with my work expect to find in my next book some kind of explanation of my obviously, to them, aberrant behavior . . . an explanation that strikes me as being totally redundant. I have been led to believe that a great many of my acquaintances were convinced that I lied to the Police and in court in order to extricate Paula and myself from the mess we were in. I didn't. I merely told the truth to save our skin. It wasn't necessary to fabricate anything. I didn't have to worry about being caught telling a lie. I didn't have to worry about contradicting myself. Still, it comes to the same thing. What I had to say enabled the Ministry of Justice to convict eight people who had frequently eaten at my table and, for reasons I still cannot explain, entrusted me with their idiotic plans. After all, Ulrich von Hargenau, the elder, had died without divulging to the *Sicherheitsdienst* the names of his fellow conspirators. So why shouldn't Ulrich Hargenau, the younger, be expected to do the same. The police knew that Paula had been the chief strategist, the planner, the brain behind so many of the Einzig "wargames," just as she must have known that I, or rather our hallowed name Hargenau would pull her out of the mess.

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And it did. A few hasty telephone calls, a few conferences, a few tears, a few negotiations, a few promises, and the Ministry of Justice was prepared to overlook, this once, our indiscretions. The day after the trial, the newspapers quoted Paula as saying pointedly that she and her group had been betrayed. No, she said. She would prefer not to name names. Well, she had said rather smugly when we met briefly in our house, this affair can't have hurt the sale of your books, or has it?

8.

What are you working on, my publisher asked me when we met shortly after my return to Germany. Something quite intriguing, I said. A love affair in Paris. He looked relieved. So much has already been written about your past political involvement, he commented tactfully. Still, I was under the impression that you might wish to add your . . . recollections.

Had he been about to say, your version?

I still receive a good deal of hate mail, I said after one of our customary prolonged silences.

We must have you over for dinner soon, he said politely. He had known my father quite well. It was an impossible situation, he had once told me, referring to my father. As a man of honor, he had no other option.

9.

I told the young American woman who had moved in upstairs that on my mother's side I was a distant relative of Albrecht Dürer. I said this without the slightest desire to impress her. I would not have brought up the subject had I not run into her in the university bookstore holding a book on Dürer. She greeted my statement with an appropriate skepticism, staring at me as if trying to gage my intentions. My mother's maiden name is Dürer, I explained. Her family moved to Würtenburg in 1803. At one time my family owned six drawings by Dürer, but now we are down to one. For lack of anything else to say I kept on talking about Dürer. I described one of the drawings that had been in my family's possession. It was one of his last drawings, the *Double Goblet*. As the title indicated it offered the viewer a view of the two ornate goblets, one balanced on top of the other, as well as revealing upon closer scrutiny an entirely different picture, one that disclosed an explicit sexual content.

You like that, don't you, she said, challenging me.

What? The sexual content?

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No, the duality in the picture. Seeing something that others may have overlooked.

She looked startled when I said: Why are you attacking me?

Later that afternoon in a bar frequented mainly by students, she told me that she had been in Würtenburg a little over six months. Tired of sharing a place with another American student, she had looked around for an apartment and found one in the building where I was staying. To support herself she gave English lessons to young German business executives, most of whom expected to be sent by their firms to America for a year or two.

Teaching beginners must be a bore, I said sympathetically.

Oh no, she said. I enjoy it. They're all extremely eager to learn English, in addition to being so very . . . Here she paused briefly, evidently searching for the right word.

Understanding.

Understanding?

I was puzzled by the word. What did she mean. Why should her German students show understanding for anything other than the information she was imparting to them. Understanding. I think that word, more than anything else she may have said, served to arouse my curiosity. It is quite conceivable that had I not been so involved in writing about Paula Hargenau, my former wife, and Marie-Jean Filebra, my former mistress (to use an old-fashioned description), I might have paid closer attention to Daphne. From her appearance and her surname I assumed that she was of German extraction. I admit that I found her serious face, her measured and frequently humorless responses to what I said, not unattractive. I don't know why. Perhaps because she gave me the appearance of someone in need of protection, although I felt convinced that she would not permit herself to accept it, if it were offered. I had not spoken of my work to her and had no reason to believe that she knew what I did or, for that matter, who I was. She did not ask questions, and I did not offer any information. I was not in the least attracted to her sexually, and for some inexplicable reason wanted to communicate this fact to her, as if feeling the need to reassure her of my intentions, as if to indicate that she could allow herself to relax in my presence. No, that is patently untrue. At this time the burden of another intimate relationship would have been more than I could handle. If anything, I was signalling to her my own unavailability.

It was a glorious summer day. Daphne and I were seated at a

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sidewalk table drinking beer and observing the people passing. She mentioned that she was studying philosophy under Klude. An American studying Klude and seeing us, as only strangers can see us, with a mixture of envy and a certain disdain.

We Germans like to draw attention to our most conspicuous flaws, since the uncertainty and doubt we arouse in strangers saves us from being inundated by a deluge of uncritical admiration.

Did I say this? If I did I retract it immediately.

What does Daphne think of me?

10.

Daphne moved into the building less than three months ago. She had found her apartment the way I had, by looking at the real estate pages of the *Würtenburger Neue Zeit.* She spoke a fluent German and had no difficulty in following the lectures at the Würtenburger University, a university, incidentally, with a reputation second to none in ancient and medieval history, the history of religion, and philosophy. She had studied German in America. Why not French or Italian. I wanted to study under Klude, she admitted shyly. Was he the principal reason why she had chosen German, I asked with what must have been a look of astonishment. She laughed. No, she had been exaggerating slightly. By the time she came across the work of Klude, she had already been taking German at college. Her father, she added, had a great many friends in Germany. He had been there during the occupation. It was he who encouraged her to study German. When I inquired if he was connected to a university, she responded with a curt no.

When Daphne moved into her apartment she found an attractive armchair, a large bed, and a chest of drawers the former tenant had left behind. There may have been a few other things, but the super and the doorman always had first picking. I was surprised that they had not taken the armchair or the chest of drawers. They wouldn't have been difficult to move. I too have discarded a great many things, yet I continue to cling to so much that has clearly outlived its usefulness.

Where did you live before you moved into this building, asked Daphne.

I was deliberately vague. Oh, here and there. I chose this place because I wanted some privacy. I didn't want to run into people I knew everytime I stepped out of the front entrance. When Daphne discovered that I had been a former student of Klude she danced a little jig, which I

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took to be an American way of expressing enthusiasm. I wasn't a particularly successful student, I hastened to tell her. I don't believe that Professor Klude ever paid the slightest attention to me. All the same, I have sent him a copy of every book I have published. Once or twice, despite his heavy schedule, he was kind enough to send me a note thanking me for the book. He greatly looked forward to reading the work of one of his former pupils, he wrote, something I had every reason to doubt.

I didn't mention this to Daphne. I didn't want her to think of me as discontent with the notes I received from Klude. Naturally, as soon as she had discovered that I was a writer she felt impelled or obliged to buy several of my books, which is more than I can say for most of my friends and acquaintances, who expect free signed copies which they do not read. Having completed or partially completed one of my books, Daphne felt compelled to say something about the work, and, being straightforward and candid, as well as a student of philosophy, she couldn't, I recognized, simply say, I enjoyed it, and let it go at that. She had to say something that would express on her part a recognition of what I had attempted to achieve, or what she thought I had tried to achieve. Obviously she tried to like the books because she liked me, or was prepared to like me or, possibly, because she wanted to like me, but no matter how hard she tried, the work was somehow inaccessible to her. That is hardly surprising in someone who admitted that she found the exploration or probing of a relationship between two or more people as something somewhat distasteful. She felt that the writer was trespassing, and I have to admit that writing is a form of trespassing. Instead of reading on and on about the tenuousness or uncertainty of someone's feelings, she preferred to question the meaning of a thing, or the meaning of a thought, preferably raising the question in German, a foreign or at any rate adopted language that enabled her to reduce these crucial questions to pure signs, since in German the word *thing* and the word *thought* did not immediately evoke in her brain the multitudinous response it did in English, where the words, those everyday words, conjured up an entire panorama of familiar associations that blunted the preciseness needed in order to bring her philosophical investigation to a satisfactory conclusion. Could this be the reason why she came to Germany? To think in German, to question herself in a foreign language?

Has she ever slept with a German?
She must have, I tell myself.

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Why this curious constraint on my part.
Answer.
Answer immediately.

11.
The police in our precinct have moved into their new quarters with a great deal of fanfare. My brother's photograph is in all the papers. All along he had been convinced that his design for the police station would be selected out of the nineteen or twenty that had been submitted. There had been a good many insinuations that he had won only because he also happened to be the son-in-law of the police chief of Würtenburg. Perhaps it did influence the jury's unanimous decision. I still recall urging him to abstain from participating for that very reason. If you win, they'll say it is because of your father-in-law. He called me naive. Christmas, he told me gleefully, he had sent the policemen at the old station a case of Piper Heitzig. Prost. Of course the newspapers did not neglect to state that the architect Hargenau was the brother of Ulrich Hargenau, the author who had admitted to being a political activist in the Einzig Gruppe. I suppose I could sue, but it would simply focus more attention on me. Attention is the last thing I need. Let Helmut get the attention.

12.
My brother takes me on a tour of the new police station. Why had I agreed to come? Immaculate corridors, large well lit offices with plate glass windows, white formica-topped desks, everything gleaming and new, and everyone, in and out of uniform, smiling broadly at us. It's like a circus. Everyone beaming their approval of my brother who is, let me not forget to add, the son-in-law of the chief of police. Helmut introduces me with a special flourish to everyone he meets. He keeps saying: This is my radical brother. Ulrich Hargenau, the writer. You may have read some of his work. To my surprise quite a number of policemen say yes. They all smile at each other as if sharing a huge joke. Any questions? my brother asks me in front of a group of senior police officers, all with glasses of champagne in their hands, all a bit red in their faces and a slight bit unsteady on their feet.

Yes. Is the young American woman on the floor above mine a radical?

I can easily find out for you, says the chief of police, smiling, feeling proud of the Hargenaus. Old, old family with a castle somewhere in East Germany. Pity that they decided to drop the von.

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I return the chief of police's smile. A brief sense of camaraderie. My period of irresponsibility is past. I have become respectable again. When it came to the crunch, I did the right thing. I swallowed my medicine, and now I am back again, free to do what I want, to go where I wish.

My brother is working on another book, says my brother.

This time, be sure to make it a best seller, says the chief of police, and they all roar with laughter.

13.

You spend an awful lot of your time sleeping, don't you? said Daphne, wrinkling her nose critically. How do you manage to get any work done?

I work late at night.

Did she look skeptical.

At the university library I looked up her father in the *International Who's Who.* Mortimer S. Hasendruck. b. Debunk, Illinois 1920. M.I.T. 1941. Dept. of Defense. 1944. Founder and President of Dust Industries. m. June G. Steinholf, 1946. s. Mark D. Hasendruck 1949. d. Daphne S. Hasendruck 1952. Address: Edea, Illinois.

What? said my brother, you mean you've never heard of Dust Industries. He seemed incredulous at my ignorance. What kind of an activist were you? Dust is one of America's largest armament manufacturers. They produced most of the advanced equipment used in Vietnam.

I guess, I said, that's why Daphne doesn't wish to speak about her father.

We must have her over for dinner, said Maria.

Sure.

14.

Today I received a note in the mail. It was brief and to the point. We know where you are. Did you expect to hide from us? Because of you Ilse, Adalbert, Jürgen, Heinz, Helga, Assif, Lerner, and Mausi are rotting in jail. Do you really expect to get off scot-free? We intend to get you. If not tomorrow then the day after, if not the day after then next week, or next month. Soon. We promise.

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I didn't destroy the unsigned note. I can't bear to throw anything away. I can't even bear to discard old magazines. It is not the first note I have received. Did they really believe that I moved here to escape from them.

Sometimes I really can't understand the Germans, said Daphne. I speak the language. I read Klude, yet . . . despairingly she shook her head . . . I can't make you out. Is this the new Germany? she asked mockingly.

My brother Helmut studied architecture at MIT. He likes to wear button-down shirts. One day he hopes to design a sixty-story office with an underground garage in Detroit. I guess he's the new Germany.

But what about you?

15.

In addition to killing two postal workers, the explosion of at least twelve to sixteen sticks of dynamite at the new post office designed by Helmut also totally destroyed four recently acquired sorting machines, as well as two dozen large sacks of unsorted first-class mail. Had the explosion taken place an hour earlier, a great many more people might have been killed. As it was, the damage to the building was considerable. Half an hour after the explosion, a woman called a local radio station and announced that the newly formed *Seventeenth of August Liberation Group* took full responsibility for the action, which had been designed to draw attention to the plight of the eight imprisoned members of the Einzig Gruppe, all sentenced to long jail terms on the seventeenth of August, one year ago. So a year had passed. I had just reached page 134 of a manuscript that was entirely based on events that had occurred since then. Until the explosion had destroyed the new post office I felt pretty confident that nothing would interrupt my work. I would go on writing the book until I was ready to submit it to my publisher, and then I would take a brief vacation, after which I would start thinking of the next book. Now I was no longer certain.

With one explosion the name Hargenau was in all the papers again. Great outrage at the senseless killings and at the mutilation of thousands of letters. Those letters would never reach their destination. Naturally there was also some speculation as to the identity of the

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members of the recently formed *Seventeenth of August Group.* My wife's name kept cropping up. She could be behind it all. But why pick on the post office? Why mutilate and destroy innocent first-class letters that may have been carrying checks to war widows and other people in need.

On the evening of the thirteenth I had dinner with Daphne in my apartment. We listened to the news. We ate sauerbraten. That's the way it reads in my diary. Dinner with Daphne. I don't keep a journal. I just jot things down in an office diary. Dinner with Daphne seemed adequate for my purposes. Explosion at post office, two dead, *Seventeenth of August Group* accepts responsibility. Did not call off dinner with Daphne. Watch news. Make love.

Do you still love her, Daphne asked
Who?
Paula, your wife.
What made you ask me that question?

16.
The first thing Daphne said to me the next morning when I opened my eyes was, I know nothing about you . . . absolutely nothing.

You'll find everything in my books.
Is that true?
No.

Daphne dressed in front of me and then walked to the door of my apartment.

I retain in my mind a picture of her standing at the door. Before leaving, she turned to look at me, at my possessions, at my apartment to which she now had a key. As far as I was concerned, everything was at a complete standstill, as the brain, feeding on the present, made room for Daphne, naked, legs parted, absorbing the image with the same ease as it had absorbed and incorporated the images I had formed of the explosion at the post office. The image of the explosion and my making love to Daphne were linked or connected by the date on which they had taken place, and possibly by a conviction I have always had that nothing is what it first appears to be.

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17.

The following Sunday Daphne and I visited my brother Helmut and his family at their house in the country. Helmut was in a great mood. He dismissed the bombing, saying that he had never been quite satisfied with the design of the post office and secretly had always wanted another go at it. Of course, it was too bad about the two men who died, and all that mail. God knows how much of it was intended for him. Before dinner we all dutifully posed for Helmut who took our photographs on the wide terrace overlooking the dense forest in the distance where Klude spends his summer months in a small house in a clearing deep inside the wood. Helmut offered to drive Daphne to see the house the next day. Knowing that she was American he spoke at great length of his stay in America and how much he enjoyed living in Boston. He kept on about his visits to Montana and Wyoming, Arkansas and Southern California, one amusing anecdote after another, then, when she least expected it, he began to question her about herself and her family. Helmut was smiling at her as she described the town in Illinois where she had grown up, her friends, her decision to come to Germany after a year in Geneva.

Geneva? I said.

Yes, she had a number of friends in Geneva. She also gave English lessons in Geneva.

My brother interrupted her. To get back to your father.

I left the room.

Could she conceivably have met Paula?

One has so little control over the irresponsible meandering of one's brain, over the improbable connections that are activated as thoughts by impulses from the brain, although, occasionally, these remote farfetched hypothetical links have a way of coming true. Almost anything the brain can conjure up is plausible.

Daphne living in Geneva.

Daphne moving into the building where I live.

Why that particular building.

Because it had been advertised in the local paper.

But had it?

18.

On Tuesday afternoon, when I returned from the library, the doorman informed me that Daphne had moved out of her apartment during my

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absence. She had not given any notice and therefore was forfeiting one-months rent. Apparently a young man in a stationwagon had helped her move some of her belongings. Speechless, I looked at the doorman, then walked to the elevator. No one answered when I rang her doorbell. On Sunday she had promised me a key to her apartment. She intended to have a duplicate made that morning. Her letter to me was slipped under my door. It was addressed to Ulrich von Hargenau. It was in her handwriting, a handwriting that was still unfamiliar.

Why the *von*?

What was she trying to say?

Dear Ulrich,

I am returning to America, in part because I do not wish to become emotionally entangled with you at this time. I do not feel happy in a role that is so devoid of any certitude. I do not like to feel that I am depending on another person. Please feel free to take anything I have left behind in the apartment. I may continue my studies in America. I wish you had not taken me to visit your brother and his family. Daphne.

19.

I am the first to admit that I don't know Daphne. I think I know what she thinks of Klude and of Germany in a vague sort of way. To some extent I know her taste in furniture, in music, in books, in clothes. If I know little else, it is because I failed to show much interest in her initially and did not engage her in conversations like my brother did in order to elicit from her why, precisely why she was in Germany, and what she felt about her father. That is not to say that I had ruled out ever asking her any of these questions, but until I received her letter, I had felt quite content to leave things as they were. I was content with our new relationship, content to sit back and muse over Daphne, the young earnest-faced American in Germany who never once asked me a single question regarding my dead father or my own somewhat dubious role at the Einzig trial.

20.

The doorman took a certain pleasure in telling me that Daphne had left. He had watched my face to see how I would receive the news. I turned and stiffly walked to the elevator, pressed the up button, entered the elevator, and pressed the button to the seventh floor under the stern unforgiving gaze of the doorman.

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21.

I took a taxi to the airport which is on the outskirts of Würtenburg, and checked with a number of airlines if anyone by the name of Daphne Hasendruck had booked a flight to America. She had not, at least not under her own name. Wishing to be thorough, I inquired at Lufthansa if a Miss Daphne Hasendruck had booked a flight to Geneva that morning. Trying to sound as diffident as possible, I mentioned that my niece, Daphne Hasendruck, was to call me on her arrival in Geneva. Since I hadn't heard from her, I was inquiring if, in fact, she had left for Geneva. I don't think that the clerk believed my story, but she did inform me—after checking a list—that a Miss Hasendruck had taken the afternoon flight to Geneva. It was not a direct flight, but her destination was Geneva.

Did she fly there to join Paula? Or did she fly there for another reason?

My brother Helmut did his best to talk me out of flying to Geneva. Whatever it is, you don't want it. Whatever it is, you don't need it. You're free. You're in the clear. She may not know Paula, he argued. She may just be drawn to the Alps, or the abundance of chocolate.

I left for Geneva the next day. As I expected, my wife was not listed in the telephone book. I had been to Geneva several times before and without giving it much thought checked into a hotel where Paula and I had once stayed for a couple of nights. It was conveniently located near the Quai du Mont-Blanc. The first thing next day I purchased a ream of paper and a map of the city. As I rather aimlessly walked around the downtown area in the vicinity of the Jardin Anglais I kept asking myself if I was in Geneva in order to locate Daphne, or my former wife, or if I was simply collecting fresh material for my next book. On the third day I found a small decent restaurant. I also found a store where the *Würtenburger Neue Zeit* was sold. I was still in Geneva when another bomb went off in Würtenburg. This one destroyed an entire floor in the fingerprint section in the new police station. When I spoke to Helmut on the phone he, in a weary voice, suggested that I remain in Geneva for the time being, adding his cautionary: Please don't fuck up . . . do you understand what I am saying. I know it's your speciality, but try not to this time.

In my hotel room I was prepared for every eventuality. I had a ream of typewriting paper and a portable Hermes, but I couldn't write

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a line. My brain, my body, had stopped functioning. Everything around me seemed at a standstill. On one of my walks I had picked up Victor Segalen's *Rene Leys*. I began reading the book one afternoon in a cafe on the rue de Rhone. Somehow, it seemed to me that the narrator in the book, a Frenchman living in Peking in 1911, was contemplating an action that in many respects paralleled or, at any rate, appeared analogous to my own endeavor in Geneva. At a time when the Forbidden City was still closed to all foreigners, the Frenchman's one overwhelming desire—in order to understand what he kept referring to as the "Within" of the Chinese Empire—was to enter (penetrate would be the right term) the Imperial Palace and see what had been withheld from him all along. Clearly, in my case, the city of Geneva did not withhold anything as tangible as the Imperial Chinese Palace, something one could assess from the outside. No. By drawing this somewhat specious comparison to the Frenchman in *Rene Leys* I was simply indulging in a favorite habit of mine—namely, attempting to view and place my personal affairs in a literary context, as if this would endow them with a clearer and richer meaning.

But why had Daphne left for Geneva?

22.

The day Klude died it was in all the French, Swiss, and German newspapers. Lengthy obituaries. Germany's greatest thinker since Hegel. Photographs of Klude in his log cabin that was only a twenty-minute drive from the country house my brother had designed for himself. An entire page listing Klude's philosophical achievements. To my surprise the editors had not omitted mention of Klude's somewhat ridiculous role during the coming to power of the Nazis. Later that day, in a quarter of Geneva I didn't know, I spotted a small bookstore. I was pleased to discover that they had several of Klude's books in French and German. After some hesitation I chose *Jetzt Zum Letzten Mahl* and *Ohne Grund*, an early work written in 1936. Upon leaving the store I caught a brief but unmistakable glimpse of Daphne in the passenger seat of a passing bright yellow Porsche. I called out, shouted her name at the top of my lungs, frantically waving my hand as I ran after the car, but probably she did not see me. Hours later, when I returned to my hotel, the desk clerk handed me a note that had been left for me. It was from Paula. It simply stated: You have taken enough. Leave us alone.

Leave us alone.

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Us? Us? Who is us?

23.

The interviewer arrives punctually at three. He has a foreign-sounding name which I do not catch. He is in his twenties, wearing a very worn-looking tweed jacket. I have no reason to feel distrustful of him. I've been through too many interviews. I smile at him, aware all the time of his thick spectacles, his disconcerting stare, his tape recorder dangling from one shoulder, all weapons that I wish to disarm with my cordiality and candor. From the very start the difficulty lies in trying to establish who exactly is interviewing whom. The tape recorder, set on the table, records a trite meaningless exchange. He looks around the room, recording in his brain my few visible possessions: the Hermes typewriter, a ream of paper, a small pile of books, underwear drying on a back of a chair, shoes, a guidebook. I offer him a glass of wine, but he declines. This makes it difficult for me. I could order tea or coffee, but he says that he has just eaten. He is not rude, at least not intentionally rude. I smoke, sip wine, and stare out of the window. I also inquire how he had managed to find out that I was staying in Geneva.

It's such a small city. Someone from the magazine recognized you on the street and passed on the information to me. I called a few hotels. I tried some of the more luxurious ones first and then worked my way down . . .

There are a lot of hotels in Geneva, I remark.

I was lucky.

It's very gratifying that you would wish to interview me. As I mentioned to you on the phone, I hope to have a book out at the end of the year.

Have you completed it.

No, I am just putting the finishing touches to it.

You're not using Geneva in the novel, by any chance.

I find it difficult if not impossible to write about a city I happen to be in, although Segalen, who I have just been reading, managed to write an extraordinary novel set in Peking, while staying in that city.

Segalen? Swiss?

No, French.

He jots the name down on a small yellow pad, then, avoiding my eyes, remarks that he had been informed that Paula was currently living in Geneva. Is that the reason why you are here? And have you been in touch with her?

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I take a puff on my cigarette. I feel strangely lightheaded. I feel comfortably relaxed in my chair. From where I am sitting, I can see the street below. Looking down at it, I am reminded of Tanner, since it is the kind of street that frequently can be seen in his films. Tanner provided me with my first real glimpse of Switzerland.

No, I reply. My wife and I are separated. I don't even know where she is staying. I'm not even certain that she is in Geneva at this time. We have not seen each other since the Einzig trial.

Does she blame you for the excessively long sentences handed out to the Gruppe?

You'll have to ask her.

As the only writer in the Gruppe, did you ever feel tempted to keep a diary or journal during the period of time you were . . . associated with them?

Quite candidly, I see no point in discussing the Gruppe. They belong to the past. Moreover, my and Paula's decision to separate had nothing to do with the Einzig Gruppe, or the outcome of the trial. Most political trials, I have come to realize, are badly in need of some sort of scapegoat to deflect questions that try to probe a little deeper . . . This trial was no exception. What I had to say at the trial was not said under any duress, contrary to what most people seem to believe. I was never an actual participant or member of the Gruppe. True, some of them had been friends, and I helped them because they were friends. Admittedly, I got a slight kick out of helping the so-called conspirators, not because I believed for one moment in their methods or in what they were hoping to achieve, but simply because I tend to dislike bureaucrats in positions of power. I didn't mind giving them a kick in the ass.

Would you consider what happened recently in Würtenburg as a kick in the ass?

No, that was very unfortunate.

Is it a coincidence that the two public buildings recently blown up by the *Seventeenth of August Group*, or whatever they call themselves, had been designed by a Hargenau?

I doubt that the action was aimed at him or me. It certainly wasn't aimed at my late father, who is something of a hero in Germany.

To return to you. Do you intend to finish your book in Geneva? And why Geneva?

I hope to complete the book here. As to why Geneva. I like being a stranger in a city . . . I like being anonymous. Incidentally, Paula and I

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stayed in this hotel several years ago. I remember feeling pleased when I discovered that Musil had stayed here briefly upon his arrival in 1940.

What is the title of your forthcoming book.

The English Lesson.

It's not a German lesson, I see.

No. We've had enough German lessons to last us for several generations.

A number of critics have referred to the element of ambiguity that permeates much of your work. One reads your books, always feeling as if some vital piece of information is being withheld.

I'm not sure how I can respond to that. If someone withholds information, surely it is not merely for the sake of withholding information. All the same, characters, like people, frequently misread each others' intentions. In *The English Lesson* a man follows a woman who left him to Geneva.

So Geneva does play a part in your novel.

Only a minor one. Almost a negligible one.

Does he locate her?

Who?

The character in your novel.

That remains to be seen.

Why Geneva?

I picked Geneva because of the image Switzerland evokes in people. A kind of controlled neutrality, a somewhat antiseptic tranquility that I find soothing. I may also have been influenced by the films of Tanner.

But Tanner is fundamentally a politically oriented filmmaker. His films are never devoid of a political content . . .

Well, yes. In *The English Lesson* the unexplained departure of the young American woman who supports herself in Germany by giving English lessons, hence the title, from a man ten or twelve years her senior, a man who might be labeled a political reactionary, could be viewed in a political context.

What kind of a political statement are you making in your book?

I'm sorry, my mind was on something else. What did you say?

What kind of a political statement are you making in your book?

A novel is not a process of rebellion. Just as it validates and makes acceptable forms of human conduct, it also validates and makes acceptable societal institutions.

Does that trouble you?

Not at all.

When are you planning to return to Germany?

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As soon as I complete the novel. I am, you might say, searching for an appropriate conclusion. In yesterday's paper there was mention of a young woman who jumped from the fourteenth story of an office building only a few blocks from this hotel. I mention this only because in life, jumping out of a window is an end, whereas in a novel, where suicide occurs all too frequently, it becomes an explanation.

I'm terribly sorry. The interviewer looks at me apologetically. I forgot to press the record button. This has never happened to me before. Could we possibly go over the interview again. Just briefly . . .

Yes, why not, I reply.

An hour later, after the interviewer has left, the phone rings, and when I pick up the receiver, ready to welcome any interruption, any small diversion, anything that will keep me from sitting down and trying to write, my brother Helmut on the other end of the line, at that hour, I presume, still in his office, calmly says: I thought you might want to know that your Daphne Hasendruck is not Daphne Hasendruck.

Of course she is.

The real Daphne Hasendruck is married to the head of Dust Enterprises in Spain. They live in Madrid. They have two children. Her name, should you wish to contact her, is Daphne Wheelock.

You spoke to her?

I was just being thorough.

Then who is our Daphne?

I haven't the foggiest idea.

Did you mention this to your father-in-law?

Do you take me for an ass?

You spotted her that weekend. You saw through her. Was that the reason for all those questions?

No. I'm just thorough. I don't want you to fuck up. It takes too much of my time.

By the way, I'm sorry about the police station.

We'll patch it up. But I've been told they lost all their files, including the one on you.

This is Switzerland, I say to myself, as I set out for a stroll later that afternoon. This is the place where Musil died, where Rilke died, where Gottfried Keller lived and died, where Jean-Jacques Rousseau was born, and where Nabokov lived, as much a prisoner of the past as I am a prisoner of the present.

Geneva 1977.

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Barbara Rose

JACKSON POLLOCK AT WORK: AN INTERVIEW WITH LEE KRASNER

As Jackson Pollock's paintings are slowly beginning to be understood as works of art belonging to a tradition of modernist painting, as opposed to scandalous personal acts that created the Pollock myth, any information regarding Pollock's own intention and methods becomes critical in defining the actual historical context within which the unprecedented masterpieces—the mural-sized, so-called "drip" paintings he began in 1947—were created. In the following interview with Pollock's widow, painter Lee Krasner, the circumstances leading up to Pollock's discovery of a new style that involved pouring diluted paint onto an unstretched piece of canvas on the floor, rather than applying paint to the conventional stretched painting on the easel or wall, are clarified. The interview, inspired by the forthcoming publication of Hans Namuth's celebrated action photographs in a book called *Pollock Painting*, reveals Krasner's intimate relationship as a colleague with her husband whose principal champion and greatest supporter she was.

Recent interest in Krasner's own career as a pioneer Abstract Expressionist, overshadowed by Pollock's celebrity, has raised the question of why her reputation suffered in relation to those of her male contemporaries. The interview makes it clear for the first time why Krasner was prohibited from painting the big pictures that were essential to the creation of the major reputations of the New York School until after Pollock's death in 1956. For, although she was an abstract artist earlier than any of the first generation New York School painters, except Reinhardt and Gorky (she was painting abstractly while her teacher Hans Hofmann was still a figurative artist), her development as a painter of large-scale, monumental works was artificially postponed as the result of the primacy both she and Pollock gave to his career. Pollock's large "drip" paintings date from the move of his studio from the bedroom in the house the couple purchased in 1945, when they moved from Greenwich Village to Springs, East

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Hampton, to the barn behind the house which became his studio in 1947. He had already been painting on the floor in the bedroom, but the move into the barn permitted the kind of physical freedom documented in Namuth's photographs and the film made in fall 1950.

With Pollock painting in the barn, Krasner finally had a studio of her own. (She had been working in the living room.) The "little image" series, her own version of all-over painting done with a conventional brush technique on easel-sized canvases, was done in this small bedroom in the late forties. After Pollock's death in 1956, Krasner began using the barn as her studio, working on a very large scale, although she never painted on the floor as Pollock had. Her memories of life in Springs, during the most productive decade of Pollock's life, add to our understanding of Pollock's central role in the history of the New York School, as well as the nature of their relationship as two working professionals.

Barbara Rose: When did Pollock begin to use the Springs studio?

Lee Krasner: We moved out there in November 1945. Pollock started to work in the bedroom upstairs in the house because the barn, which later became the studio, was a mess, filled with lots of rough iron things and some farm implements. Mr. Quinn, the former owner of the house, had something to do with the town roads, so there were all kinds of things in there. You could barely get in, so it was a matter of clearing it out. And that would take time, so he started to work in the house. Pollock's 1946 show was painted in one of the bedrooms upstairs in the house. He painted *The Key* in the bedroom. I remember because it was in the '46 show.

As you know, Pollock painted on the floor: *The Key* took up the whole space on the bedroom floor. He could barely walk around it. The move into the studio had to follow that, because in addition to clearing the barn out, we also moved it, to the site it's on now. (It was directly behind the house and cut off our whole view.) The next show he has is in 1949—in fact, he had two shows in '49, so it must have been between 1947 and 1949 that the building was cleared out and moved, and he began to work in the bigger studio in the barn.

Barbara Rose: Was there a change in scale because of Pollock's move of his studio from the bedroom to the barn?

Lee Krasner: Surely, since his 1950 show had some big paintings. It had *One, Autumn Rhythm* hanging opposite it, *Lavender Mist*, plus the big black and white painting in Düsseldorf, the Muriel Newman

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painting in Chicago, which is about the size of *Lavender Mist*, plus some other big paintings. However, I want to point out that before we moved out to Springs, when we were living on Eighth Street in the Village, Peggy Guggenheim commissioned the mural for her apartment, which is the largest painting Pollock ever painted. That was in 1943. Incidently, that's not painted on the floor. Pollock didn't always paint on the floor, although he painted a great deal on the floor. For that mural, we had to rip out a wall and carry out the plaster in buckets every night. We weren't supposed to live in the building, which we rented from Sailor's Snug Harbor. At any rate, we needed to create a wall large enough to hold the mural, so we broke down a partition between two rooms. That created a wall long enough for him to get that big mural painting on.

Barbara Rose: Was that Peggy Guggenheim's dimensions or Pollock's?

Lee Krasner: The mural was a commission from Peggy of a fixed dimension to fit into the hallway, I believe. She specified the dimension.

Barbara Rose: Can you be more specific about the date Pollock began painting in the barn?

Lee Krasner: In 1949 he had two exhibitions. Those paintings were done in the barn, so I would say the move took place probably in 1947. When he took the barn, I took the bedroom as my studio. I do know that my mosaic table was done in 1947, before I got the bedroom. (I was working in the living room.) I remember I moved into the bedroom after the mosaic table was done. It was probably in 1947, not long after Pollock had his 1946 show.

Barbara Rose: The first "drip" paintings were made in 1947. Do you think moving into the barn had anything to do with greater physical freedom?

Lee Krasner: It would be very convenient to think along those lines, but I don't believe that was it. Pollock had a lot more space on Eighth Street. He wasn't confined to one tiny little room. I think the increase in size has more to do with the fundamental aspects of why he did what he did. He certainly needed the physical space to work as he did, but I think he would have found the physical space whenever he was ready to paint with large gestures.

Barbara Rose: Do you remember how and why Pollock started the "drip" paintings? Did he speak of experimenting with a new technique?

Lee Krasner: I am always rather astonished when I read of a given date. I actually cannot remember when I first saw them.

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Barbara Rose: Was there a perception that he was entering a new area?

Lee Krasner: There was certainly a sense of "I never saw this before." There is that feeling. But with Pollock one had a lot of that surprise to deal with.

Barbara Rose: Did he have a sense of how important the "drip" paintings were at the time?

Lee Krasner: I can only surmise that; I cannot quote him. I have a feeling that he was aware of their importance.

Barbara Rose: When was the first time you recall seeing him paint on the floor?

Lee Krasner: He didn't do it when we lived on Eighth Street in New York. But, I remember *The Key* on the floor in the bedroom in 1946. I can't remember him working on the floor in New York, so he must have begun in Springs. I don't have the remotest idea of why he wanted to work on the floor.

Barbara Rose: Was there any precedent?

Lee Krasner: The only thing I remember hearing was that he had seen the Indian sand painters working on the ground. As you know, Pollock didn't verbalize at all times. He kept things pretty much to himself; occasionally he said something. I only remember hearing about the Indian sand paintings from him in terms of a precedent for working on the ground.

Barbara Rose: Yet formalist critics discount the Indian influence in order to make him a thoroughly European artist.

Lee Krasner: Of course he was very aware of European art, but what he identified with was about as American as apple pie. His stories about the Indians—and he made many trips to the West—were not European in any sense. In finding this flow of paint, this thrust of paint, this aerial form which then landed—his so-called breakthrough—he could merge many traditions of art. You recall he had said in a '44 interview that here in the East, only the Atlantic gave him a sense of space that he was accustomed to. He did work with his father, who was a surveyor, in the Grand Canyon, so he really had a sense of physical space. In finding this technique of expressing what he expressed, he merged many things out of his American background—which does not disconnect him from tradition and his knowledge of European painting. His art was a synthesis.

Barbara Rose: Was the barn heated at this time?

Lee Krasner: The barn was not heated at that time. In some early photographs you can literally see between the boards, which means

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it wasn't insulated or heated. And that means seasonal work.

Barbara Rose: So he didn't work in the winter?

Lee Krasner: No, not dead, dead winter, until later on. At one point he got one of those terrible kerosene stoves, and if he was working he could ignite it, which terrified me. A little wooden barn, full of pigment and all sorts of flammable stuff, heated by one of those kerosene potbellies. You know, with a chimney and a big kerosene container on the bottom. Very frightening.

Barbara Rose: When he didn't paint, did he draw?

Lee Krasner: Not necessarily. He really worked in cycles. When he was working, the weather didn't especially stop him. He would put layers and layers of clothing on and would ignite that kerosene thing and work. But there were some months, about four or five months of the year when it was bitter, bitter cold out there, when you really couldn't work. Otherwise, he could manage somehow or other. He did an enormous amount of work considering that there was no heat in the barn.

Barbara Rose: Did you feel that temperamentally the seasons had an effect on him out there?

Lee Krasner: At the time I wasn't aware of it as such. Certainly his relationship to nature was intense. For example, the moon had a tremendous effect on him, and he liked gardening. Just walking on the beach in the wintertime, with snow on the sand was exciting. He identified very strongly with nature.

Barbara Rose: What do you mean by the moon having an effect on him?

Lee Krasner: He painted a series of moon pictures, and spoke about it often. This is one of the things we had in common, because the moon had quite an effect on me, too. It made me feel more emotional, more intense—it would build a momentum of some sort for me. He spoke of the moon quite often. He referred to *Portrait in a Dream* as the "dark side of the moon." There was a whole series of moon paintings—*Moon Woman, Mad Moon Woman, Moon Woman Cuts the Circle.*

Barbara Rose: Do you know where his knowledge of mythology came from?

Lee Krasner: I think his interest in myth originally stems from one of his high school teachers in California. I can't remember the man's name, but he was interested in Eastern philosophy. He introduced him to Eastern philosophy, and consequently he attended lectures by

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Krishnamurti. All of which happened long before I met him. By the time I had met him, he had been in Jungian analysis, which had a mythic basis.

Barbara Rose: Did he know anything about Indian legends actually?

Lee Krasner: He used to relate how his father took him on trips where they used to see where the Indians used to live, so he must have had some contact back there. How much he knew of the myths, I don't know. He had the Smithsonian books on the American Indian. I think there were twelve volumes of that, and since he had them I assume he had read them. In there, he could have dug out myths, if he didn't know of them prior to that.

Barbara Rose: Pollock's actual materials—his brushes, paints, etc.—where did he get them? And did he prefer a certain range of color?

Lee Krasner: He preferred house painter's brushes, rather than fine art brushes. He indulged in materials very heavily. That is to say for drawings, he had the most fantastic collection of pens I had ever seen. He would go into Rosenthal's art supply store before we moved out to Springs and would pick out every new form of pen that would come out. With regard to color, he started at some point in the late forties to use commercial paints. I don't know why. He never explained why.

Barbara Rose: You didn't have plastic paints yet. No matter how you thinned oil down you could never get the liquidity of enamel or house paint.

Lee Krasner: Exactly. I think that had more to do with his decision in getting commercial paint. He could do what he wanted to do with it. He also at one point got Du Pont to make up very special paints for him, and special thinners that were not turpentine. I don't know what it was.

Barbara Rose: Do you remember how he got in touch with the paint chemist?

Lee Krasner: I don't remember, but at the time the painting Rockefeller owned was burned, the restorer got in touch with me, and I had to go to the studio and write it out so they could contact the Du Pont people and find out precisely how to deal with it.

Barbara Rose: What were these special paints that Du Pont developed for Pollock?

Lee Krasner: I don't know. I simply gave them the name of the paints and asked them to be in touch with Du Pont's chemists to find out.

Barbara Rose: During the period, when Pollock was doing the "drip"

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paintings, did he use a limited range of colors? After *The Key* he begins to use a completely different palette from the high-key Fauve color of the early forties.

Lee Krasner: Why he shifts from one thing to another I couldn't say. Even in those commercial paints, there is quite a range of color. I would pick one color, and he would pick quite another. Color is a very personal thing. He had a choice within the range of commercial paints. He certainly never used the full range that existed. He chose what he wanted.

Barbara Rose: Do you have any idea why he used silver paint? Was that radiator enamel?

Lee Krasner: I think it can be used on radiators, or pipes, or anything else. No, I have no idea why he used it. As a matter of fact, it came up quite recently. I think it was O'Connor who dug up some literature that Pollock read when he was involved with Eastern philosophy. He came up with an illustration of something that was very heavily dripped. If Pollock had seen that, it would mean he was aware of silver paint as well as the so-called "drip" way back somewhere. I can remember O'Connor saying that it was conceivable Pollock had read this pamphlet before he came East. It could have been something that he was aware of way back in California.

Barbara Rose: Did he ever speak about materials?

Lee Krasner: Rarely. I think he had read quite a bit about technique because in his library there were books about it. In fact, I still leave his books in Springs. So he was conscious and aware of the technical aspects of painting. But he would also say that you could not deal too much with the technique; there are certain basic rules you have to know, and then forget it.

Barbara Rose: Do you have any idea why he used crushed glass in his paintings?

Lee Krasner: He didn't use all that much. It was for a very short time. Texture interested him. Crushed glass created texture.

Barbara Rose: Did you ever observe him painting?

Lee Krasner: Yes. I saw him painting the mural on Eighth Street. I saw him painting *Number 7,* and *Number 8,* and *Moon Woman.* So I saw him paint before he moved out to the barn. Out in East Hampton, when he was in the barn, I saw him paint there too. When he called me in, I would see what he had done. He might start to work while I was there.

Barbara Rose: He would call you in when he wanted to reflect on something?

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Lee Krasner: No. The pattern was that if he went out to work, I did not ever just come into the studio. But he might come back from the studio and I might say something like, "How did it go?", although I could tell before I asked the question. And he would say on occasion, "Not bad, would you like to see what I did?" I would go out with him and see what he did. Sometimes on these occasions he might pick up and start to work while I was there. I saw him do some cutouts, for example. At different times I saw him do bits and pieces.

Barbara Rose: Do you have any idea why he cut out parts of the canvas?

Lee Krasner: No more than why I might start to collage at some point.

Barbara Rose: Is there anything you can remember about his working process? I guess he was simply very absorbed.

Lee Krasner: When he worked, oh yes.

Barbara Rose: You get the impression that it was like a trance.

Lee Krasner: It's a romantic idea, but to a degree it is true. He would take off so to speak. It is a form of leaving your surroundings. There were periods when he would just observe his work or be critical. There are both aspects—the total involvement and the subsequent objective criticism.

Barbara Rose: That's very important. E. A. Carmean writes in his National Gallery text that there was a series of paintings all painted at the same time. He claims that the first layer of the "drip" was applied on all equally. He then left them and went back to them at different stages as a kind of critical revision.

Lee Krasner: Sometimes he did revise and sometimes he didn't.

Barbara Rose: He might do something, look at it, leave it, then go back to it?

Lee Krasner: Certainly, although he didn't have a standard procedure. A painting like *Blue Poles* he reentered many, many times, and just kept saying, "This won't come through." That went on for quite a long time.

Barbara Rose: How long, normally, would it take him to paint a painting?

Lee Krasner: It really varied. When he got hung up in something, like *Blue Poles,* where he did get hung up, it took quite a long time. This went on beyond weeks. He might just walk away from it for a stretch of time, and then come back, reenter. Others came through more easily for him. When they came through, they came through rather rapidly. Relatively.

Barbara Rose: What percentage of the work was destroyed?

Lee Krasner: Very little. Generally, he wouldn't give up a canvas. He

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would just stay with it until it was resolved for him.

Barbara Rose: It was my impression that a lot was destroyed because of the high risk element.

Lee Krasner: Not at all. His assuredness at that time is frightening to me. The confidence, and the way he would do it was unbelievable at that time.

Barbara Rose: How did this confidence evolve? Was it an outcome of all the years of drawing and the translation of that drawing into a larger gesture?

Lee Krasner: That's right. Because the backlog of what he has, the drawings you speak of, was quite a body of work. At some point he was ready to let it all happen in the scale he wanted it to happen on.

Barbara Rose: Then you don't know what inspired the "drip" technique?

Lee Krasner: For me it is working in the air and knowing where it will land. It is really quite uncanny. Even the Indian sand painters were working in the sand, not in the air.

Barbara Rose: That implies that there must have been a whole period of practicing the aerial gesture.

Lee Krasner: There probably was on a smaller scale, but I wouldn't know.

Barbara Rose: There are small "drip" paintings of course. In descriptions of Pollock, there is often reference to Pollock's "balletic" movements.

Lee Krasner: It is all called dance in some form. He was a terrible social dancer. That's not a reflection of his rhythm.

Barbara Rose: The physical grace of Pollock in Namuth's film is simply breathtaking. Was he athletic?

Lee Krasner: No. No sport that I ever encountered. His interests were the antithesis of athletics. Except boxing. He liked to look at that occasionally on television.

Barbara Rose: You listened to jazz together.

Lee Krasner: He had his own thing about jazz. He would sometimes listen four or five consecutive days and nights to New Orleans jazz until I would go crazy. The house would be rocking and rolling with it.

Barbara Rose: Any classical music?

Lee Krasner: Not that I'm aware of. I like classical music, and if I had it on, Pollock would certainly listen. And he had some poetry on records that he would listen to.

Barbara Rose: Did Pollock paint by natural light or artificial light?

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Lee Krasner: Natural light only, never artificial. He *never* worked at night.

Barbara Rose: I remember being struck by the fact that the barn is filled with brilliant light from high windows, but entirely closed off at eye level. Was the fact that the studio had good natural light important?

Lee Krasner: Oh, I think so. When the barn was moved, he wanted the window high, so as not to be able to look out. He didn't want to be disturbed by the scene around him. He wanted his studio totally closed off, I remember that very definitely. The barn was altered when it was moved to the side of the house from directly behind the house where it blocked our view. Where the window should be placed was really the only alteration. A new studio window was added. I remember asking him if whether it wouldn't be a good idea to place another window someplace else as well as where he said. He said, "No, no, I don't want to be disturbed by the outside view when I'm working."

Barbara Rose: Why did he allow Namuth to photograph him?

Lee Krasner: I haven't the faintest idea. He had been photographed by other people like Herbert Matter. It wasn't as if he had never been photographed before Namuth.

Barbara Rose: But was he ever photographed painting before?

Lee Krasner: No. That was the first time and consequently the only time he was photographed working.

Barbara Rose: Did he say anything about the experience?

Lee Krasner: In the past he said it made him uncomfortable. He wouldn't allow it.

Barbara Rose: Yet he is not self-conscious in Namuth's film, not like someone being observed.

Lee Krasner: When he was working, I think he would have been unaware of anything else.

Barbara Rose: The glass painting he works on in the film is a curiosity, unlike anything else in Pollock's oeuvre. I understand it was Namuth's idea that he should paint on glass.

Lee Krasner: Was it? I was there while Pollock painted it, certainly. But I wasn't there when Namuth suggested that he paint on glass. As far as I'm concerned, Jackson got a sheet of glass, and decided to paint on it, and Namuth photographed it.

Barbara Rose: It didn't have the status of an art object until Pollock decided it was a painting, however.

Lee Krasner: The first I heard of it, Pollock showed me a piece of glass. When I asked him what it was for, he said he wanted to try to paint

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on it. As you know, he was constantly experimenting. I always thought he got the idea of painting on glass from Duchamp.

Barbara Rose: The painting on glass produced during the film is in a sense the literal realization of the idea of suspending an image in space—of eliminating the background by making it transparent. It evolves so logically out of Pollock's concerns at the time, I can't believe it was just a chance by-product of the film. However, the existence of the film is something of a miracle.

Lee Krasner: I do not know why Pollock agreed to permit Namuth to film him working. It was entirely contrary to his nature. However, we are very fortunate that he did and that we have such a document.

ELIZABETH BISHOP

1911–1979

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David J. Gordon

THE STORY OF A CRITICAL IDEA

A generation ago, some influential theorists of literature defended what they called the autonomy of the text. They wanted of course to say that a work we call art has freed itself from the circumstances of its origin and should be judged accordingly. But autonomy also implied, or came to imply, that the meaning of a text existed apart from the minds of individual readers. This idea of meaning is now widely rejected. We now say that meaning can only be created in the minds of interpreters, that we, not texts, are the makers of meaning. But how do we then escape the morass of relativism? If meaning is created by an interpreter, how can the objectivity of any interpretation, the determinacy of any textual meaning, be defended?

That no current question of literary theory is more troublesome and divisive is indicated by the intensity with which extreme positions are advocated and by the difficulty of establishing middle ground. On one side are the literary historians who, as if impatient with the uncertainties of interpretation, emphasize the positive knowledge they gain by connecting a work to its author's life and cultural situation. No one scorns such inquiry fundamentally, but it is a response to a noncritical question—how did this work, whose meaning and value I am taking for granted, come to be?—and the results are bound to be reductive if pressed into the service of criticism. On the other side are some dogmatic yet remarkably prestigious relativists, progeny of Heidegger, who assert that an objective or correct interpretation is an impossible goal; the meaning of a text is completely indeterminate; criticism cannot be a discipline that accumulates knowledge, and is justified only aesthetically.

One explanation for the charm of relativism in our age is that, as children of Kant and his Copernican revolution, we are all more or less uncertain about the grounds of objective judgment. But, as E. D. Hirsch points out in his very able defense of determinacy (*The Aims of Interpretation*), to proceed from the idea that the knower's mind is implicated in all knowledge to the idea that no "objective" knowledge

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is therefore possible is "Kantianism gone mad." Kant was concerned to show, in regard to *Naturwissenschaft*, that there was a universal structure of subjectivity that secured the possibility of scientific knowledge. Hirsch describes how Dilthey extended Kant's reasoning to the area of *Geisteswissenschaft*, and overcame the nightmare of total relativism by demonstrating that the perspective we learn from our culture is not totally determining. Any reader can in principle understand any writer because he is able to adopt alien cultural categories (a capacity that Vico and Herder, the fathers of cultural relativism, never doubted). Husserl refined this idea by arguing, in opposition to Heidegger, that we are able to "bracket" our characteristic way of seeing; nothing requires that the attitudes of a culture or of an individual be homogeneous; each of us can to some extent detach himself from his customary perspective. Piaget added that as children we in fact all learn continually to correct the hypotheses we construct about the world. Heidegger's idea that we are all trapped by our *Welt* is, in Karl Popper's words, merely "a difficulty exaggerated into an impossibility."

The structuralist critics have attempted to circumvent the idea of a correct understanding between persons by insisting that the language of a text is separate from the mind of its producer. Hirsch effectively counters this argument by pointing out that a particular linguistic form cannot be said to control meaning completely because several forms may have the same meaning and several meanings the same form, when the context permits. There is, in other words, no escaping the idea of intention embedded in a linguistic context (something like J. L. Austin's "illocutionary force," a force beyond mere locutions but arising from them). This sort of intention, of course, is quite different from the extrinsic intention marked off by the New Critics as irrelevant. Nor does it lead us back to a fixed independent meaning that rules out the possibility of many correct interpretations; the question is whether, in view of that possibility, we can say we are looking at the same object and on that basis define objectivity.

The idea that interpreters, despite their different viewpoints, perceive the same object is crucial to Hirsch's distinction between meaning and significance, roughly description and evaluation. This distinction has practical importance (although it is often difficult to tell in particular cases—Hirsch never descends to cases—where one leaves off and the other begins) but even more importance theoretically. Objectivity in criticism, as indeed in science, can only be measured by consensus. But meaning can never be consensual since it is by defini-

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tion whatever different people see in a text. What we can agree on is a choice of norm that establishes what we have decided to look for. No norm, says Hirsch firmly, can be deduced from a text; it must be chosen. Much of what we call literary value—apart from the not inconsiderable value inherent in the very act of making sense—is normative judgment.

The norm most of us follow, whether we are fully conscious of it, is authorial intention—that is, we say the best interpretation is the one that tries to understand what the author meant to say. We cannot know for sure that we have succeeded but we might have. If our judgment is shared by a community of others, it is objective and constitutes knowledge. But it follows that if a norm is an ethical choice rather than an epistemological inevitability, another norm could be chosen. And the structuralist critics have in effect done that. Rejecting as an interpretative goal "what the author meant to say," they are led to an anachronistic norm: the best meaning would be one that in some interesting way reflects the reader or his age or his favorite theory. Can judgment of this kind be considered objective? Only, it seems to me, if the interpretative community were homogeneous enough to make the anachronistic norm a constant—as it was for medieval Christian interpreters who agreed to find in the classics what was useful for their faith. There is surely no such consensus today nor is one likely to develop in the foreseeable future. The critic who recognizes the norm of authorial intention (which doesn't of course mean that he must like that intention) is providing the only practical basis for criticism as an intellectual discipline.

What I want to show in the following pages is how the indeterminacy debate (at any rate the twentieth-century version of it) arose and developed, how the concern with close reading stemming from Richards, Empson, and Leavis brought the dilemma of relativism into sharp focus, and how a number of contemporary theorists, attempting (daringly or modishly) nothing less than a deconstruction of our historical and scientific modes of thought, have got tangled in inconsistencies. Perhaps I shall also be able to account for some of the fascination of their enterprise and to clarify its limited usefulness.

I. A. Richards in the 1920s formulated a view of reading that was influenced by the growing fields of linguistics and psychology but was carefully set off from each. Literary art, he insisted, is a communication by means of language rather than a revelation of an author's mind; "we read to find out not what authors were thinking but what their words can do for us." The mind of the author is something we project for the

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sake of the communication: "we imagine a mental state relevant to the poem"; we imagine (as his best pupil William Empson put it) a mental state according to which what is said "would appear true." Such a formulation challenges two opposite kinds of critical confidence that had some currency before Richards, intuitionism and positivism. He understood both that we could never know directly what an author meant to say and that we could never discover a single, fixed meaning in the language itself. Acknowledging the dilemma of relativism, Richards made concessions to it: readers "must be free to choose their own interpretations deep down after much surface conformity." This is not quite an endorsement of indeterminacy; in fact, as his *Practical Criticism* (1929) makes clear, he cared enough about the ideal of a reliable reading to be appalled by the corruptibility of the communication process, and later he even turned away from criticism and tried to simplify the verbal medium. What is important here is that, without becoming an outright relativist, Richards recognized the sources of uncertainty, and allowed his principles to be modified accordingly.

Prescriptive compromise, however, is inherently unstable, and it is not surprising that Richards's influence soon forked into opposite directions, most readily associated with the names of William Empson and F. R. Leavis. Especially in *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, Empson (followed by Burke) weakened our confidence in the determinacy of textual meaning by making the boundary of relevance in interpretation more difficult to define. Leavis, along with a number of American critics who valued both close reading and moral firmness (Winters, Tate, Ransom, Blackmur, Wimsatt, and Brooks), strengthened it again though at the risk of confusing intrinsic and extrinsic judgments.

Empson returns repeatedly to the question of the author's intention and the erosion of that standard under the pressure of his search for multiple implications. His fascination with ambiguity and "complex words" dizzies the reader—Richards himself, with friendly wit, compared the experience of reading Empson to that of sickening for the flu—but the boldness is calculated. Indeed, it is one of the attractive features of his work that it raises theoretical problems without fretting about neat solutions, as if not to spoil the fun. He coils back and forth across the line between relevance and irrelevance, nimbly evading a commitment in particular cases as to whether an author meant what he said, as to "how much of his activity he is conscious of, and how much of his activity he could be conscious of if he tried." He likes to see how far he can go, conceding that "relevance and unity are threatened by complex situations," yet he holds back from the abyss of total indeterminacy.

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"The quite unintentional is not part of communication." Again, "If the user is completely unconscious of the double meaning, it should not count." Yet "there are different degrees of unconsciousness." And if an ambiguity seems to correspond to inconsistencies which are typical of a work or which illuminate the changing history of language, it may add richness and force rather than create a muddle. Thus he can assert, apropos of *Paradise Lost*, "That [Milton's] feelings were crying out against his appalling theology in favor of freedom, happiness, and the pursuit of truth was I think not apparent to him"—and add, in a note, "the poem gets its great merit from presenting the real ambiguity of its theme with such dramatic and insinuating power." An admittedly "irrelevant" interpretation of two lines from Ben Jonson is nevertheless "not an accident": it is "meaning latent in the mode of action of poetry." What Empson is reaching for is an expanded idea of intention, equated not so much with the will of a particular writer as with a sort of collective mind responsive to the total situation of language at a cultural moment.

Leavis, more interested in "true judgment" than verbal ambiguity, addresses the text-writer relationship in a different way. He distinguishes between better and worse art according to how well the artist knows and disciplines his emotions and how sensitive he is to the opportunities of his language and form. Often Leavis seems to be the purest kind of aesthetic critic (notably in "'Thought' and Emotional Quality," reprinted most recently in *The Living Principle*), intent upon descriptive accuracy and the pressure of feeling upon language. Yet moral argument is never far behind and sometimes rather too near. David Lodge (in *The Language of Fiction*) suggests that verse brings out the aesthetic critic in Leavis more fully than prose. This seems true. Discussing verse, he usually conveys an implicit appeal to a consensus—"this is so, isn't it?"—whereas in discussing prose, he tends to preach positive moral tone, belittling a Swift for lacking it, indulging a Lawrence for displaying it.

The combination in Leavis of descriptive accuracy and moral readiness leads sometimes to the result that other critics find themselves able to use the same evidence as the basis for quite different evaluations. C. S. Lewis memorably observed: "It is not that [Leavis] and I see different things when we look at *Paradise Lost*. He sees and hates the very same things I see and love." Compare this to Alfred Kazin's shrewd remark that Eliot said precisely the right things about Blake's imaginative independence and drew the wrong conclusions. Or to numerous observations on other Romantic poets by Winters, Tate, and Blackmur, which someone more favorably disposed could accept as description

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and invert as evaluation. Indeed, Leavis's remarks on Shelley in *Revaluation*—so alert to the distinctive movement of the verse yet so disapproving—are an ideal example.

The chief difficulty with such criticism is not that it evaluates in addition to describing. It is that one tends to be imposed on the other. Terms like maturity, poise, seriousness, disinterestedness, and complexity (or simplicity) are used to express what art is as well as what it ought to be. One of Leavis's favorite locutions is the "rightness of a phrase," an equivocation so perfect that one cannot tell which sort of judgment is being rendered. Frankly extrinsic moral judgments, such as we get from artist-critics who permit themselves to be openly offended by alien values, though they may be only peripheral criticism, contain none of this difficulty: Bernard Shaw's remark that Hamlet, because he honors revenge, "has the morals of a bushranger," is actually clarifying, for all its outrageousness, in that it measures the gulf between modern and Renaissance sensibilities and implicitly respects the effort a modern reader must make to adopt alien values. In short, the courage one admires in Leavis, Winters, and others to believe that they can get at what an author is saying and can distinguish unrealized from fulfilled intentions in art is offset by their reluctance to question their own preferences and admit the problematics of evaluation.

The late W. K. Wimsatt, the most self-examining and conscientious of the New Critical theorists, in his posthumous volume, *The Day of the Leopards* (1976), reopens his earlier discussion of intention, stating that he had not meant to prescribe a single correct meaning for a literary text; the interpreter could, without charging incoherence, discover multiple intentions, shifts of intention, conflicts of intention, or even unconscious intention. What is interesting here is that Wimsatt's increased flexibility does not fundamentally compromise his belief in determinacy. The author's intention may simply be more comprehensive. (Even unconscious intention is apparently used in the sense of covert or latent implication rather than, as I would use it, implication that makes sense only if we connect it, beyond the text, to a repressed idea.) Wimsatt's flexibility was an attempt to confront the radical indeterminacy espoused by Hillis Miller, who, following Jacques Derrida, asserted that the identity of a poem "must fade into the multitude of its associations" and be absorbed into the culture at large. But the reargument does not really explain why the intentional fallacy, if it meant nothing more restrictive than what Wimsatt later said it did, should have aroused so much controversy. In truth the New

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Critics did seem to say that a norm could be deduced from the work itself.

Much of what has been happening in Anglo-American literary theory during the last thirty years is clearly a reaction to the strictness of New Critical doctrine. I am not referring particularly to Northrop Frye, important and influential as his work was in the fifties and sixties. Frye certainly did expand our notion of a text but did not address himself to the dilemma of relativism or even the problems of distortion and misreading. The current fascination with these topics seems to owe most to the influence of French structuralists, especially Barthes and Derrida. But the attempts to assimilate their extreme relativism into the mainstream of Anglo-American literary theory have led to arguments whose radical pretensions are not wholly earned.

There is, I should say first, an unproblematic and quite effective use by contemporary theorists of the current interest in indeterminacy. It studies the temporary uncertainty imposed on the reader by the work's narrative and rhetorical strategies. One impressive example is Barbara Smith's *Poetic Closure,* a study of how poems end, i.e., how the reader is manipulated in the process of understanding. Another is Martin Price's fine essay, "The Irrelevant Detail and the Emergence of Form" (in The English Institute's *Aspects of Narrative*). Price points to the tendency in some realistic fiction toward loose coordination of detail, the presence at the circumference of the design of detail that approaches irrelevance. But, demurring from Barthes's attempt to isolate quite irrelevant detail (and thus to prove that a linguistic structure will undermine the presence in the work of a controlling designer), he shows how the seemingly irrelevant detail can be understood as a marginal case, making the reader aware that the writer is aware of creating a fiction. Form, for Price, is a dynamic conception, gradually emerging for the reader.

The concept of indeterminacy becomes problematic when it is applied to literary art *au fond,* when the critic interprets even works of high thematic stress as epistemological puzzles or "self-consuming artifacts." The last phrase is the title of a book by Stanley Fish, who with excessive literalness applies the insight that sense is made by a reader rather than a printed page. Fish's reader stops every few words to respond to a different signal from the text until he is thoroughly "decertainized." This willful foreshortening (which ignores the broader signals of genre, the assuring continuity of style, and the reader's tolerance of temporary uncertainty) is, for him, the common experience of reading: any standing back to take in a spatial whole

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rather than a temporal discontinuity is an illicit act of abstraction and generalization. (Yet Carl Sagan in *The Dragons of Eden* observes that serial and simultaneous perception belong to different hemispheres of the brain and are equally natural.) Fish cites Wittgenstein in an epigraph, and indeed he does try to write in the spirit of Wittgenstein's remark that philosophy is not a theory but an activity. But can criticism (or the sciences, which are not different from criticism fundamentally) be conducted in that way? Wittgenstein (I will come back to him later) questions one's point of departure, the very basis of theory, whereas critics (and scientists) work back and forth between some theory and the facts it organizes and is supported and corrected by.

Fish is a remarkably resourceful literary theorist but also an ostentatious one, for his theory finally turns into something much less radical and original than he imagines it does. Although he thinks of his "affective stylistics" as the very opposite of formalism and although he belittles the distinction between purposeful and accidental allusion, he is really defending an idea of normative judgment based on the author's intention. He merely adds what we described at the outset as a now widespread conviction: "Interpretation creates the intention and its formal realization by creating the conditions in which it becomes possible to pick them out." (Hirsch had earlier put the point more clearly: "The object of interpretation is no automatic given but a task the interpreter sets for himself. He decides what he wants to actualize and what purpose his actualization should achieve.") The point itself is sound but it is not consistent with what Fish elsewhere seems to think he is saying. Nor is this quite sensible statement: "What is noticed is what has been made noticeable by an interpretive strategy," but we are not doomed to relativism because "we share interpretive strategies."

Fish is only one of a number of contemporary critics who want to match the boldness of dogmatic relativists like Barthes and Derrida but who also, unlike them, want to protect literary criticism as a discipline, and whose arguments in consequence overreach themselves and get tangled in inconsistencies.

Another is James Kincaid (writing in *Critical Inquiry*, summer 1977), who argues that the texts of interest to us are incoherent because they "offer mutually competing coherencies." Conflicting intentions cannot be comprehended in an overall intention because (here Kincaid sounds like Fish, although he shrewdly criticizes his theory), in the

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actual process of reading, one cannot see competing coherencies at the same time, just as one cannot see the duck and the rabbit at the same time in the famous graphic puzzle. A sufficient answer to this argument might be that the very purpose of the duck/rabbit drawing is the dilemma of the interpreter, but a more fundamental answer is that Kincaid chooses to understand contrary currents within a work as a logical problem rather than a psychological phenomenon. Like Barthes, he speaks of contradiction, implying discontinuity, whereas a critic who perceived no metaphysical gulf between author and work would speak of conflict or ambivalence, implying no discontinuity at all. To say that Dickens's attitude toward Fagin or Shakespeare's toward Shylock or Fitzgerald's toward Gatsby is ambivalent is no doubt to put the matter too simply, but the idea could be refined without requiring us to say that the work is incoherent. We do not need to resort to the term contradiction, and hence to the conclusion that the controlling subject is eliminated. Kincaid likes the word duplicity—the duplicity of the text—but that implies deception, and who is deceived? Neither the writer nor the reader in any of his examples.

Another critic whose theoretical radicalism is less than convincing is Wolfgang Iser, in his essay, "Indeterminacy and the Reader's Response" (now included in his book *The Implied Reader*). The last half of it is a cogent account, comparable to Price's, of the increasing degree of openness or ambiguity in the form of the novel since the eighteenth century. But in the first half he reaches out toward a claim of complete indeterminacy and rather awkwardly retreats. After agreeing with Susan Sontag about the need to substitute an erotics for a hermeneutics of reading, he attempts a bold assertion of his own which dwindles within a paragraph to the mildest of truisms:

> Shouldn't the interpreter in fact renounce his sanctified role of conveying meanings? . . . His description of a text is only one of the possible realizations of a text. . . . [The meaning any critic finds] will always appear with a slightly individualistic touch.

From a dubious first statement Iser slips past a solid second to an excessively weak third.

Norman Holland is also fascinated by the idea of critical subjectivity, and in him too inconsistency belies a seeming boldness. His enthusiastic embrace of relativism prompts him to set up what must today be called a straw man, the critic who believes that objective

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interpretation means finding the single fixed meaning intended by the writer:

> At first glance one would think that the writer controls through the text the experience the reader has, but, if so, then the work of art would be a fixed stimulus eliciting a fixed response, and simple experience tells us this is not the case. . . . [The writer] cannot prevent the reader from making the most dreadful hash of what he has written.

Holland would have us believe that criticism cannot be objective only because every reading reflects the reader, and he goes so far as to declare, "If criticism is objective, why should critics sign their work"! Yet he does not altogether abandon the idea of determinacy, for he speaks of the "dreadful hash" a reader might make of a work, a contingency that clearly implies some standard of what a relevant or reliable reading would be. And indeed, from time to time in his books, Holland explicitly (and rather too agreeably) concedes the need for standards of judgment, without worrying about the resultant inconsistencies.

I find it curious that Holland should invoke Freud (whom he has often written about) for his brand of subjectivism. Although Freud did teach that our opinions are determined more than we realize by unconscious biases, he also taught—and created a therapeutic method on the basis of believing—that it is possible for us to observe ourselves and to some extent correct our judgments. Yet Holland's reader remains helplessly in the grip of his own fantasies. If Holland were content to study his students' personal responses to literature only for the sake of the psychological insight they afford, his *5 Readers Reading* would be easy enough to praise, because he has the trained psychoanalyst's ability to discover preconscious connections in associative speech, and because the principles he formulates governing fantasy involvement with a story or poem are psychologically plausible. But he presents the responses as a contribution to criticism, and forces us to say that they won't do. The encounter-group level of diction and thought maintained by the students and endorsed by Holland is simply bathetic in relation to the text. But how could anyone write effective criticism who is trying to answer the question "How do I feel about this poem?" instead of "What does the poem mean?" (In another book that features the personal responses of students, Walter Slatoff's *With Respect to Readers*, the samples are no more impressive than Holland's, but because Slatoff's aims are pedagogic rather than

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theoretical—he believes students gain by expressing their own likes and dislikes, even if these don't correspond to those of the novelist—they do not raise the same problems.)

Frank Kermode (in *The Classic,* 1975) is more alert than Holland to the consequence of assuming a radical discontinuity between a writer's and a reader's mental set or "probability system." He knows that an attack on the norm of authorial intention commits him to an anachronistic norm, and he openly seeks through criticism an escape from the morass of temporality. Reviving the spirit of the medieval interpreters who "accommodated" pre-Christian texts to their Christian worldview, he redefines the classic as the text that achieves immortality by remaining open to an ever-renewed reader. It is the process of making sense that is permanent.

This is a seductive view, but I think its strength must depend on the truth of the idea that there is (or could soon be) a major community of readers ready to return from a historical to a mythic framework of thought. I doubt that the overarching metaphor of historical progression, which has dominated Western thinking since the eighteenth century, can so easily be put aside. Kermode's own book lends support to this doubt because it is frequently aware of the original contexts of the works it discusses and can't help interpreting them according to an implicit standard of authorial intention. Here is a passage in which he overtly rejects such a norm but covertly accepts it:

> To say that the meaning of [*The Scarlet Letter* or *The House of the Seven Gables*] is the meaning Hawthorne meant is pointless: his texts, with all their varying, fading voices, their controlled lapses into possible inauthenticity, are meant as invitations to co-production on the part of the reader.

"Controlled," "are meant," "invitation," "co-production"? Surely these imply a designer and director identifiable with the author. There is, after all, a middle ground between a single right sense for a text and a limitless openness, between the monolith and the abyss.

Kermode rightly identifies the most resourceful opponent of his argument as E. D. Hirsch, although, when he wrote *The Classic,* he had not read *The Aims of Interpretation* (1976), a persuasive sequel to *Validity in Interpretation* (1966). His argument is in any case too subtle to require much changing in light of Hirsch's demonstration that interpretative relativism is no philosophic necessity. But I wonder how he would respond to another point not made earlier, that an anachronistic norm, though as defensible logically as the norm of authorial

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intention, is not a practical basis for criticism as an intellectual discipline.

The boldest and most systematic skeptics from Nietzsche to Derrida have apparently been prepared to question whether knowledge is indeed what we want from criticism and the sciences or whether it might be better to think of all such structures aesthetically, as mythologies. The word science can be retained (as in the structuralists' *les sciences humaines*) but only if it becomes indistinguishable in meaning from myth. For any use of language entailing a referential as well as reflexive function is the product of an artificial (Cartesian) dualism. The "theory" of structuralism is thus understood to be on a different scale from theories capable of being replaced and corrected. As one of Barthes's apologists, Yves Velan, complacently remarked: "In order to discuss structuralism, one has to adopt its point of view"!

Yet it is not so easy to leap clear of a "Cartesian" universe, and the dependence of these philosophically radical critics on terms like distortion, repression, and misreading belies their denial of the possibility of correct interpretation. Hirsch comments wryly, "I was once told by someone who denied the possibility of a correct interpretation that I had not interpreted his writings correctly." I think that Derrida ingeniously anticipates this objection when he implies that, because the notion of correctness is meaningless to the enlightened but not to the rest of his readers, he will use it and other such notions, *sous rature*, under erasure—while waiting, presumably, for the new era in which equivocation will no longer be necessary.

An enterprise that attempts a wholesale revision of the very concept of science might be dismissed as absurd if it did not engage so much intellectual energy. But it is difficult to be impressed by arguments that seek support by distorting such scientific ideas as Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle and Freud's repression. The Uncertainty Principle actually works against them, for it protects the idea of objective knowledge by specifying the margin of error in our perceptions and should really be called, therefore, according to J. Bronowski, the principle of tolerance. As for Freudian theory, the revisionary effort directed toward it has been so sustained and complex that I cannot do justice to the subject here, but a brief consideration of two critical theorists who represent this effort, Jacques Derrida and Harold Bloom, will round out the indeterminacy debate as I have presented it.

In order to destroy a view of writing that permits us to think of an author or sovereign self behind it, Derrida adopts the dubious strategy of making writing (écriture) mean both less and more than it is taken to

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mean. On the one hand, it is the mere marks on the page. Since the relation between word and meaning is purely metaphoric, whenever we refer to anything we are forgetting or "repressing" this knowledge. Moreover, in our need for presence, we "repress" the fact that writing (unlike speech) always implies the absence of a speaker, and we compensate by constructing the illusion of an author governing meaning. On the other hand, writing is all of the stimuli which imprint themselves on the memory and become unconscious (in the sense that they are removed from the field of direct perception). But the unconscious is nothing other than language, for Derrida quite accepts Jacques Lacan's equation of the two. And just as any investigation of the unconscious must finally dissolve into the unknown (Freud had said that dreams can be interpreted only up to a point), so the probing of any text arrives at a point where the author's control over his assumptions can be said to dissolve, whereupon the text is deconstructed. The text belongs to language, not to the author, and language is not a unified field. There is nothing behind language, no base or origin but only an abyss. Yet Derrida thinks of his deconstruction as joyous work because it is intoxicating to look into the abyss. The "conventional" critic protects meaning, and establishes a boundary of relevance. But the deconstructionist, by ignoring what the author might have meant, somehow "opens" the text and "produces" meaning. He releases the text from the history of ideas, literature, and metaphysics.

Such an approach to criticism seems to have a purely philosophic interest, as Derrida apparently realizes, for he rightly calls interpretation and evaluation empirical activities and then rejects them precisely because, for him, empiricism and philosophy are mutually exclusive. This may be true for philosophy but a nonempirical criticism or science is out of the question.

Bloom is a much more formidable *literary* critic than Derrida, with a great deal of interpretation to his credit, much of it definitive in the sense that anyone writing on the same subject cannot avoid taking it into account. He has even objected to structuralist criticism on the grounds that it does not pay sufficient attention to the meaning of particular texts. Indeed, he is so concerned with distortion in the usual sense that one has trouble fitting his theory to his practice.

The anxiety of influence is a theory that contains a fertile insight into the creative process. With an authority based on wide and accurate reading, Bloom has seized upon and made his own the insight that the poet who aspires to originality must try to rid himself of the very

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influences he had first to absorb, must wrestle with his chosen predecessors. In contrast to his former mentor, Northrop Frye, who imagined new poets joining the republic of letters the way one joined a church, Bloom describes the relation as a usurpation. The poet who would make room for himself must displace or "misread" his predecessors. And this creative necessity shows up in his poems as a "repression" of the threatening influence.

The theory undoubtedly helps us to understand the process by which poems come into being, the struggle of a poet with the voices of earlier ones in order to find his own voice. But it is much less certain that it helps us interpret the finished work. In weaker poems, one hears unconscious allusions to other poems. But Bloom is emphatically only interested in those which have achieved a highly original voice and style. And in these, surely, the allusions to other poems are assimilated and purposeful. Why should a creatively used allusion be called a misreading since it doesn't pretend to be a reading at all? Bloom says categorically that a strong poem's true subject "is its repression of the precursor poem." But he must strain to discover his evidence, as when (in *Poetry and Repression*) he positively identifies the image of the blind man's eye in "Tintern Abbey," perfectly appropriate in context, with the unacknowledged and threatening presence of John Milton.

The underpinning of Bloom's theory is an ingenious Freudian revisionism similar to Derrida's. Bloom also accepts Lacan's equation of the unconscious with the structure of language. Thus, every so-called psychological process is really a rhetorical one (condensation equals metaphor, displacement equals metonymy, and so forth). It is true that Bloom starts from psyche rather than text and always perceives poetry as a battle of wills (in his book on Wallace Stevens he observes that the deconstructionist, in effect, says, "In the beginning was the trope" whereas he would say, "In the beginning was the troper"), but these wills and psyches exist entirely within an intertextual universe. It is as if Frye's comparatively inoffensive overstatement—poems are made out of other poems, novels out of other novels—were absolutized by the addition of "onlys." Thus, like Derrida, Bloom makes poetry into something both less and more than what it is taken to mean. On the one hand, the poet as poet is strictly distinguished from the poet as man, and Bloom presses into service a number of psychoanalytic terms—anxiety, oedipal conflict, unconscious, repression—to refer only to poetic relationships, not to human ones. On the other hand, the poem is linked to all other poems and indeed all other writing, for Bloom (like Blake and Shelley) insists that

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criticism is nothing other than poetry by a different name. All writers are poets, either strong or weak, and invite the same kind of interpretation. Bloom's hostility to the idea of objective interpretation, then, derives not so much from the strength of his skepticism as from the strength of his belief in the universality of poetry.

It should seem strange that theories so subversive of the institutional teaching of literature should prove fascinating enough to the academic community to bring into being within the last few years more than half a dozen heady but substantially produced new journals. Part of this fascination, no doubt, is that they offer an alternative to the limitations—often the boredom—of explication. Then too, they provide a release from the restraint of attending to someone else's vision; they appeal to a frustrated creative urge in critics who feel, sometimes not without reason, that their own intellectual powers are equal to those of the writers whom they teach—although their own habits of thinking may be too governed by concepts to enable them to succeed in the more plastic and concrete uses of language.

There may also be an element of snobbery in the current fascination with theorists who boast that they have dared to look into the abyss. They rather enjoy the abyss and enjoy their contempt for intellectuals who ignore it. But the neglect of ultimate philosophical questions is not necessarily naive. Theory is not dogma for any scientist or critic worth his salt, and there is plenty of opportunity for sophistication, even philosophical sophistication, without invoking an abyss.

Yet it is true that a prolonged reliance on a framework may lead us to take it for granted. And if we need a philosophic reminder at that point, I think that Wittgenstein's work provides a more attractive form of it than Derrida's because it is less contemptuous, more purely imaginative. The reference theory of meaning, beyond a certain point, *does* get us all into trouble, and Wittgenstein's idea that the meaning of a concept depends on its use can, when skillfully applied (as it is by John M. Ellis in *Theory of Literary Criticism: A Logical Analysis*), resolve the difficulties we encounter when we take literally such dichotomies as connotation versus denotation or style versus content. There is, in other words, an ultimate indeterminacy about any quest for knowledge. Facts are constituted by a theory which is itself not absolute. But this questioning of the reality of facts is based on a very rarified insight. For those who till one or another field of knowledge, a logic that suspends all knowledge is not recommended for daily use.

We conclude that the idea of indeterminacy, when applied with

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some restraint, has proved to be a liberating one for criticism. But in its pure form the idea may well be oppressive, being the product, as a rule, of a covert arrogance. It is, in a sense, an argument beyond argument, based on the doctrine that belief must precede understanding. The doctrine is attractive at first, for we are all sometimes tired of contention and dispute, but is likely soon to become coercive and authoritarian. This is an old story in intellectual and of course political history—the promise of greater freedom than we have known turning into something quite different. A critical view of such stories is always worthwhile, not only to furnish a rational basis for resistance but also to prevent us in turn from saying complacently what we have long known, that freedom works best in the complex middle ranges.

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VARIETY

Edith Kurzweil

FREUDIANS OF ALL COUNTRIES UNITE

Seventy years after Freud's visit to America, the International Psychoanalytic Association met for the first time in this country. Top mental health and psychiatric officials who had come to greet the Freudians assured them that psychoanalysts had joined their own ranks, and had become "established." And Mayor Koch welcomed them to New York, urging them to venture beyond the cool Waldorf-Astoria into the other boroughs. But to judge from the attendance at meetings, most of the 2300 analysts took their work seriously: they stayed around to argue about abstruse theoretical and clinical issues. And although, as we will note, they had many differences about theory, and about training, the meetings, for the most part, were friendly, as participants related their own therapeutic experiences to the formation of theories arising out of collective clinical data, and to Freud's original formulations.

No one could attend the many simultaneous workshops and sessions, nor read all the papers. But I was struck by the fact that Freudians now read Freud more critically (and no less appreciatively) than they had, for instance, at their congress in Vienna, in 1971. Quite possibly, the Freudian analysts' fall from grace, or at least from popularity, which has taken different forms in other countries, has led to a healthy reexamination of themselves, to a personal as well as an institutional "reanalysis"—a painful ordeal for anyone.

Actually, institutional reanalysis had been a topic of the precongress on training—the meeting of representatives of each of the organizations belonging to the International Psychoanalytic Association (I.P.A.). Official reports about these closed meetings indicated that participants had questioned the nature of the relation of psychoanalysis to psychotherapy, and the implications from the varying positions (with advantages and disadvantages) adopted by medically or nonmedically trained supervising analysts as they related to candidates in an institute and to the society around them. These concerns with training,

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of course, go to the roots of other questions: the social pressures that challenge the analysts' identity, the change in social origin, level of sophistication and presenting symptoms of potential patients, the pseudosophistication through the spread of psychoanalytic jargon by the media, the increasingly adaptive responses which may themselves represent new defenses against analysis, the expectation of the "quick cure" antithetical to the aims of successful analysis, and many more.

As in the past, the difference between psychoanalysis and psychoanalytically oriented therapy was an emotionally charged—yet scientific—issue. In America, stated Leo Stone, psychotherapy is the stepchild in the training program. And Jacob Arlow supported this position, reminding us that even Freud had wondered to what extent psychoanalysis may serve as the family romance of the analyst. Although every candidate must be analytically trained, both Arlow and Stone reasoned that one has to deal with the fact that sixty to seventy percent of patients are getting psychoanalytically oriented therapy. Daniel Widlocher, a Parisian Freudian, argued against two separate types of treatment on the grounds that all psychoanalysts practice therapy during their training, and that they frequently become analysts only to improve their practice of therapy. Undoubtedly this holds true for the Parisian ambiance, where Lacanian psychoanalysis (his candidates "graduate" by declaring themselves fit to practice) has become as fashionable as such American therapies as primal scream, est, rolfing, encounter, or Gestalt. The American contingent at the Congress was annoyed at Widlocher, who seemed to imply that their definition of analysis relies on techniques, and on the management of situations; his own goal, allegedly, was broader, and more concerned with values—a concern that implies moral superiority. Once again the issue of psychoanalysis as a natural science versus an art, or a combination of the two, was raised. But this was a mild version of previous disagreements, which already for Freud had led to institutional splits. Widlocher's position seemed to be welcomed by the Argentinians, the Mexicans, and to some extent by the Israelis; London analysts have incorporated their splits by the coexistence of three currents (Freudian, Kleinian, and Middle group) within their institute; and the Germans, who lack teaching analysts for their many candidates (two-years wait to begin training) do not yet think of splitting. In any case, the discussions about training anticipated some of the topics Edward Joseph, the president of the I.P.A., touched on in his inaugural address.

Joseph summarized psychoanalysis's past, its areas of investigations, its increased knowledge of mental life, which, in turn, changed

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individual child-rearing practices, and the nature of the population coming to psychoanalysis. In addition to citing observational studies of children and adults which greatly enhanced psychoanalytic knowledge exploring the depth of the mind "in reality, in fantasy, developmentally, and chronologically," Joseph elaborated on the ego's mediating role between id, superego, and the external reality, on the relationship of the mind to aspects of time and space, and on the conflict and dynamic interplay at unconscious levels in terms of language and language development. Essentially, Joseph underlined that the systematic collection of data in all these areas, which led to changing theories, and, in turn, influenced subsequent data collection, proved the scientificity of psychoanalysis. In detail, and rather convincingly, he drew an analogy to nuclear physics, where, as in psychoanalysis, everything seemed clear as long as a simple theory explained the nature of the atomic particle, and became complex and finally completely unclear when more knowledge about atoms was available.

But unlike the physicist, who can learn about his field through books and from experiments, the analytic candidate must make his personality an integral part of his educational process. Thus the training, along with the personality of the candidate, will itself influence the type of analysis and theory he will practice. Joseph perceived this as an important reason for many of the arguments within psychoanalysis, as a problem leading to a breakdown in communication between analysts, and as a reinforcing link between analysts of different generations who hold the same theoretical views. Joseph's address was a call for solidarity, a reminder that every psychoanalyst functions primarily in the psychoanalytic session by submitting his own self to scrutiny, honesty, transference, and countertransference phenomena. By stressing this unifying element, Joseph's olive branches dominated the meetings.

Nevertheless, there were some minor tempests. The old debate around metapsychology, once more, was continued by Charles Brenner and Merton Gill. Brenner argued that for Freud "metapsychology", ever since 1901, meant the study of unconscious mental processes via the psychoanalytic method, whereas Gill, since 1959, had defined it as "the study of the assumptions on which psychoanalytic theory is based." Tracing the concept through all of Freud's works, Brenner found that Freud had understood metapsychology to be the totality of psychoanalytic theory. On the surface, debates on these definitions of metapsychology resemble useless academic exercises. From them, however, derive assumptions about all aspects of psychoanalysis. Thus

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Brenner could interpret Freud to have defined psychoanalysis as a branch of science that lacks a philosophy of life, whereas Gill could refute Brenner on grounds that the natural sciences do not deal with causes, that psychoanalysis is a hermeneutic science which includes expressions of the body, of meaning, and of values. Both Brenner and Gill quoted Paul Ricoeur, but, I believe, forgot that Ricoeur's hermeneutics, in the last analysis, not only praise Freud's discovery of the unconscious, but superimpose a belief in God or a higher order which they both would question. The entire debate had a *déjà vu* quality: it was a replica—on a high level—of the debates on the scientificity of sociology, philosophy, or political science; this is part of our twentieth-century *Zeitgeist,* and, ultimately, proves only the mental versatility of the participants.

I found the panels and the workshops that dealt more specifically with clinical psychoanalysis such as, for example, those on *The Life Cycle as Indicated by the Nature of the Transference in Children, Adolescents, and in Older People,* more illuminating. By analyzing patients' transference and their own countertransference, psychoanalysts have gone far beyond Freud's original knowledge about libidinal phase organization (oral, anal, phallic-oedipal, latency, genital) and its relationship to psychic maturation and organization. Research on children (led in London by Anna Freud, and in America by Margaret Mahler, John McDevitt, or Eleanor Galenson) allows for the observation of evolving differentiation of perception, affect, ideas, and action. Because the child's psychic organization is still in flux, stated Peter Neubauer, and the transference neurosis, at times, is absent during the oedipal period and during latency, the child analyst is able to watch the complexities of progression and regression as the child struggles to maintain newly learned reality.

Peter Blos argued that "the adolescent repeats in analysis not only the pathogenetic past but also the healthy infantile strivings which activate the formation of psychic structure." He, and others, illustrated such theoretical observations with cases. We learned that in one instance, the analyst repeatedly had to hear about the names, characteristics, and habits of forty-six animals, before a six-year-old patient could allow himself to confide his "bad" fantasies. And we were told how a seventeen-year-old patient's sudden lateness for his analytic session manifested behavior that, originally, "was a conflict with his father who always had kept his son waiting but accused his son, in case he was late, for not loving his father . . . By submitting meekly for a year to the rules of analysis the patient had assured himself of the

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analyst's love at the expense of his depressed self-esteem. His lateness was his first and resounding 'No.'"

Until rather recently, adolescents had been found nearly impossible to analyze. Blos acknowledged that they are subject to massive transference resistance which could, in some cases, only be overcome by allowing the patient to leave the analyst—after interpreting this need to leave. Most of his patients, however, then returned within a year or so to complete their analysis.

At the other end of the spectrum, Pearl King, a London analyst, related how she had successfully treated elderly people who previously had been thought unanalyzable. She spoke, for instance, of her sixty-three-year-old patient who had been deeply depressed at the thought of retirement, and who had lived a new and satisfactory life for the past twenty-five years. Mentioning the difficulties of working with analytic material that spanned five generations (from grandparents to grandchildren), and of taking the parental role with persons older than oneself, she outlined techniques that would expedite this task. She discovered that an older analysand, however, had more trouble leaving the analyst, and related how she still received letters from some of her former patients. These were not cases of "interminable" analyses, but of human affirmation.

But termination of analysis, according to Herbert Gaskill, is always difficult, because there is no consensus about therapeutic objectives, or even about the meaning of the term "terminal phase." Leon Grinberg's more abstract approach to the subject focused on the "interminability" of some analyses, which he blamed on the (American) medical model, and on technical difficulties with patients which may lead to impatience, intolerance, and insecurity in the analyst. He suggested that more emphasis be placed on analysts' unconscious motives, such as wanting to retain a patient or to terminate him prematurely. A number of analysts argued that these dangers can be minimized by analyzing the countertransference. But there are paradoxical relations between the patient's life goals, and between the analysis of the transference neurosis and its application to the widening scope of psychoanalysis, argued Gaskill, as well as limitations of the therapeutic instrument (i.e., analyst's skills), and of the potential fit of patient and analyst. Leo Rangell concurred by reminding us that termination consists of a diagnostic reevaluation of the analysis; that the real truth is that of repressed drives; that anxiety was the reason for the analysis in the first place. Thus one must ask whether the patient is still subject to uncontrolled affects, and how his relations to others

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have changed. Contrary to popular notions, this is not an adaptation to reality, but only an understanding of that reality.

In addition to sessions such as interpretation and validation (Jacob Arlow), considerations of regression (Hans Loewald), anxiety neurosis (Joyce McDougall), core gender identity and separation-individuation (Margaret Mahler and John McDevitt), or the handling of resistances (Paul A. Dewald and David Rosenfeld), there were discussions on the effects of the holocaust (Milton E. Jucovy), action language (Roy Schaefer), on Janus as allegorical divinity (P.C. Recamier), on external reality as a force in psychoanalysis (Luis Feder), on the psychoanalytic treatment of handicapped patients (André Lussier and Clifford Yorke), on the role of the father (Eugenio Gaddini), and many more. Psychoanalysts examined their own role in society, family transactions, psychosomatic disorder, mourning, and sleep-dream research. These "applied" topics, of course, were anchored in theory, and there the recurring controversies revolved around object relations, narcissism, character disorders, and the concept of self.

To nonanalysts these discussions seem extremely technical and abstract, so many dancers on the proverbial pinhead—and an invisible pinhead at that. Nevertheless, as H. Shmuel Erlich pointed out, psychoanalysts now have more comprehensive models of the early differentiation and consolidation of the self—as it interacts with psychic and physical reality, as it relates to the early formation of psychic structure (i.e., Jacobson, Kernberg, Kohut, Winnicott), and as its development (and that of the ego-ideal) affect conceptualizations of the superego (Sandler, Kohut). But all the current explorations keep harking back to Freud, often explaining textual contradictions and extrapolating from these. Because all of Freud's original insights have by now been "filled in" with thousands of cases, the way Freud is interpreted is more than hero worship: it influences clinical work. For the clinical situation, as Arlow maintained, is the standard method of investigation. Both *doing* and *being* of the patient are shaped by experience, and psychoanalysis itself becomes part of experience. With interpretations, for example, the patient becomes active and learns about the analyst's technique; and he learns to identify with him during the curative process. Yet the same information means different things at different times; there are specific sessions; the analyst may pay special attention to the first thing the patient says; he may hypothesize as he puts the data together in a meaningful way. Since the analyst has no physical replica like the physicist to reproduce the situation, he must test his hypotheses against further developments, against what

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stirs things up, what happens next. The individual suffering from conflict *must* resort to metaphors (of expression or experience) and does provide the analyst with clues that lead to insights. When to interpret and when to keep silent—another recurrent question—can only be answered in connection with the analyst's and the analysand's personalities, with the rapport they have established at a particular moment.

To some extent cultural factors enter, but, as Otto Kernberg who had analyzed patients in German, English, and Spanish informed us, these nearly disappear after the early stages, after the cultural clichés and basics have been explored. The rockbottom line of interpretation, in whatever language, that permits confirming validation of insights, of whatever theoretical line, was found to be the development of a structure of a patient's intrapsychic experience that goes beyond the recovery of one or more striking incidents, that constructs the "individualized developmental constellation."

This is what differentiates psychoanalysis and psychoanalytically oriented therapy from all the other and briefer therapies—"placebos" that make the individual feel better temporarily but thereby strengthen defenses and impoverish his possible range of responses. But this topic only crept in by the side door, when talk turned to the scarcity of psychoanalytic patients. Therapy, including psychoanalytically oriented therapy, not only costs less, but is less painful. Psychoanalysis depends, to some extent, on the development of a transference neurosis, and this can be unpleasant and frightening, though helpful in the long run. And the more a patient knows about this process, the more "clever" his unconscious defenses tend to become. Thus a number of older analysts still feel that it helps not to disclose psychoanalytic techniques. But this is what psychoanalytic candidates object to, insofar as it prolongs their feelings of dependence on their own analyst, and on the specific orientation of their institute.

Clearly, there are many differences from country to country, both within and outside psychoanalysis. What in some places passes for analysis is called therapy in others. Erik Erikson thought that some overseas colleagues seem to recognize a new and shocking subspecies of Americanized Freudians. In any event, the American contingent is research oriented, whereas the French one tends to make more references to language, to metaphor, or to the Janus-faced aspects of their work. South American analysts showed a similar bent, coupled with Kleinian formulations which trace psychic development back to the intrauterine condition.

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Discussions of psychoanalysts' fees were not on the agenda, but it was clear to everyone that the Argentinians and Mexicans could afford to stay at the Waldorf-Astoria (with their families), whereas most of the English, Austrian, and Israeli analysts lived elsewhere or were put up by American colleagues. But the analyst's financial status, inevitably, reflects sociological factors and cultural differences. Some of these, to a certain extent, were addressed by Erik Erikson.

Erikson's assignment for his concluding talk had been to relate transference phenomena to the human life cycle. He chose to include the generational cycles, which, in turn, are experienced differently in different cultures. Enlarging on his former concepts of *factuality* (recognizable by all at a given stage of cognitive development in a given technological period) and *actuality* (actualization of individuals sharing such facts), he now added *contextuality* (comprehensibility which suddenly explains what was previously known). "Freud's discovery of infantile sexuality belongs to this category," as does his own concept of *epigenesis*. With the help of tapestries (woven by Joan Erikson), he illustrated how the stages of life he wrote about in *Childhood and Society* and in *Identity, Youth and Crisis* are both specific and interwoven, yet contain their dystonic elements (mistrust, shame, guilt, etc.). Conceding that details may be debatable, he added a new dimension to each of his stages of life (hope, will, purpose, competency, fidelity, love, care, and wisdom) to explain intergenerational renewal. By postulating such a human potential to the crisis at every stage, Erikson managed to inject a popular note into an otherwise theoretical congress. He thereby helped to show in simpler language how psychoanalysis is of potential concern to us all. (He again indicated his sensitivity to contemporary issues when he mentioned that in the play age masculine and feminine modes and roles are taken, alternately, by both sexes, and that he calls this the infantile-genital rather than the phallic stage.) He continued to return to the issues that had dominated the congress, enlarging on the Oedipus myth—its social issues, its origin as a play with an audience, its linguistic implications, and metaphoric qualities. Erikson also spoke of birth control as a new form of repression, by those young adults who sublimate their generativity in activity: they now seem to care more for the children who are born, but don't know what they are missing by not bearing their own. Thus they present a new problem to the psychoanalyst, who can deal with it through the transference. By comparing transference and the corresponding countertransference experiences, in various cultural and historical settings, between analy-

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sands and analysts of given sexes and ages, Erikson concluded that psychoanalysis remains the prime method for the study of generational relativity of human experience.

Undoubtedly, Erikson's topic belongs in the philosophical realm—the level of psychoanalysis which, according to Waelder, is the most removed from clinical experience. But as Freud's general works were better known than his clinical concepts, so Erikson's words carry more weight than those of "simple" clinicians. (Erikson has said about himself that he is more popular than Freud because he is easier to understand.) This is not to denigrate Erikson's outstanding clinical abilities or his contributions on the life cycle, but to point to the paradox in the social and cultural climate which engenders psychoanalytic investigation while appreciating only its global wisdoms. To some extent, featuring Erikson on prime congress time—as the concluding panelist—itself indicates the recognition by Freudian analysts of the need for a better press. Branded reactionary, insular, and secretive, during the last few years, they had good reason for concern. Still, the press might have ignored the congress, had it not found "popular" issues such as psychoanalysis in relation to the handicapped, to the holocaust, or to birth control on the program.

I am not arguing that these issues are irrelevant, or less valid than studies of personality disorders or transference phenomena, nor that the program committee of the I.P.A. played to the press, but only, that, as in the past, the most interesting (and frequently abstract) contributions of psychoanalysis remain ignored. For the deep and important insights about personality formation and interaction continue to originate in clinical psychoanalysis, and then are quickly adapted, watered-down, and distorted by the media and by media-prone therapies. Whether this represents a new type of psychic defense, economic adaptation, or social stratification is a moot point. Many of the therapists who denounce the Freudians are clever enough to copy parts of their findings; and many psychoanalysts who do not practice have used their training to become high-level administrators in the helping professions. Clearly, psychoanalysts are accepted individually and mistrusted as a group. But this, again, opens up sociological questions which, so far, we cannot answer.

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POEMS

Four Poems by Václav Pinkava

A MEMORY

This is so far away that it feels like a different incarnation
but it seems that once there was a lake
and while the moon was rising between roses like a horse's head
and the wind was flowing through the grass
the lake filled with stars when the cosmic peacock
spread his tail silently over so many light years
then free of the defilement of garments
I floated in the lake a real astronaut.
So one day my soul my mysterious inhabitant
wilt thou float free of the defilement of my body
through the fiery tail of the cosmic peacock
in the ecstatic harmonious yelling of the stars.

INVOCATION

This is the hour of absolute repentance
huge white rabbits suffering from fluffism
appear from nowhere and jump into holes in space again.
The whistling path of ineffable loneliness
spans the Cosmos reaching the silver heart
of an angel immobilized in a blue crystal.
Oh angel Telesphoros
come over the Cosmos on swift wings
and bring me from afar the message
whispering in my ear the mystery of gnats
and then perhaps let us perish together
in the velvety softness of A flat major.

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MIDNIGHT MAGIC

When it is midnight over the ancient city
there are heraldic beasts flying above its spires
a unicorn a crowned lion with a fish tail
a winged mermaid and a leg in armour.
A silent knight with a copper rose instead of a face
steps out of his niche and disappears in the ground
spitting blue and purple sparks on the pavement.
But the heads of the twenty-seven protestant peers
carry on singing the mass "Dolorosi Martyr"
some of them taking the soprano part in trained falsettos.
You can hear them if you listen hard enough
they have not yet stopped after three hundred and fifty-six years.

A NOSTALGIC SWIM

Saints have been petrified in excited gestures
but the water under the bridge is deep and placid
since the soldiers have moved into the former convent
it is inadvisable to swim too near.
Yet you can come after sunset when the stars are bathing
and when the river has turned to indigo
take a torch with you a waterproof one.
And diving quietly shine it under the surface
and you can still see the Bearded Man in the pillar
he is covered with algae now and the fish nest in his mouth.
Then turn on your back and slowly paddle to the island
to see whether the white night heron is still alive
Nycticorax nycticorax!
he must be dead by now weep greenly you copper statues.
Anyway the guitar and two female voices
embroider the green darkness with silver threads.

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Marc Cohen

SHEEP TO SHEARS

I am to injury
nothing but this.
Though brilliant
at the surging surf,
never existing by prince
and pauper tides,
sorted by him and chosen
once in this verity,
he never beat his wife.
Call it patience
or understanding.
Like bitterness, he laughed.
The voice is sandy

and ghosts. In the tank
village we are guilty.
UFO fragments torment
this watch. He is not moving
but rather painting
a feeling not yet here.

What will mother think?
The wooden pain
brushed on the ocean front
with an innocent drop
was his blackguard duty.
I lost a part
of the middle finger,
small and left
in Far Rockaway, victim
to a tin pail, a crack
and myself. Little to be
known, journeys that begin
at dawn and stop
in dumb night.

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Laurence Lieberman

THE KOFUKUJI ARSONISTS

In Kofukuji museum stands a phalanx
of august statues—stone, clay and bronze figures—
salvaged from two millennia of lordly
firebugs (can Japanese pyromania,
a dominant trait, be carried in the genes?). . . .

From era to era, embattled warlords
sped to be first to set fire to shrine or sacred
temple, each breathless to outpace the rival.
At midnight, all the sculpted deities, gathered
withindoors, re-live their heroic couplings
to long-dead hermit priests who rescued them
throughout history, the monks keeping one jump
ahead of the royal incendiaries—
those feuding clans! Conflagrations erupt
like brushfires on a sun-baked hillside, each sparked

by insult or stain of honor. Yet always,
century after century, the exile
monk, life-taken-between-the-teeth outlaw
from both factions, steals into the blaze, leaps
through the circle of flames, and flying, wingless,

through the collapsing doorway, dodges falling
rafter, crumbling doorjamb—each a hoop of fire:
he must race flame-tongues licking across the walls,
sweeping interior chambers. A Kofukuji
student monk, trained in soldiership, always saves,
first, Kannon Bosatsu (the thousand-handed,
eleven-faced squatting Goddess of Mercy):
hoisting the statue, braced on the fireman's
carry-hold of his crossed forearms, or hefted
up high on his back; and then, tumbling backwards

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through the flaming rubble, he drops to one knee,
perhaps, to dash out the sparks and swat away
white-hot embers that threaten to scorch her outer
skin—a shell of gold leaves, in a few spots the kiln-baked
gilt layer charring through, nearly exposing

the tougher second skin of japanned lacquer—
a hard black gloss of laminated varnish
miraculously resisting hottest coals,
the many-layered shellac epidermis
warding off demonic forked snake-tongues of flame . . .
He ignors the sizzling mouths of fire, open-
throated, gaping widely over his back
and flanks, soundless wails through the wounds of maws
in his scratchy haircloth shirt. He does not see
her thousand arms grow limber and soft, the frantic

waving of her hands brushing firebrands away
from all sides of his body as he flees: a few
dozen hands cupped and smothering the charred lips
of holes in his cloak; a few hands whisking the flamelets
(fingers of fire) away from his face and bare skull;

others, caressing and sheltering his singed—
but unfired—beard. Each of her eleven faces,
springing to life with a different expression,
assumes a guise to fortify his nerve
or ease his pain. He communes with the many-visaged
deity, taking strength from her glances—
smiles, grimaces, scowls, radiant beckonings . . .
He laughs outright, boldly gives thanks; then chides
his innocence, curses her for a Gorgon
in disguise—Medusa! He shuts his eyes, hurtles

through the smoldering egress, life, limb and saved
Goddess intact, barrelling from the ash-heap
ruins . . . Sequestered in the outlying forest,
his laughter returns in a great timber-
splintering roar, irrepressible. . . .

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Leslie Wolf

A MOMENT WITH ROBIN HOOD

Evening, and the glass forest
is too rattled to hold its breath. Does
her livery of mustard and plum now reach
like an arm through the prism of wood,
a secret too squeamish for passersby?

The pricked stars wince
but the night is scarcely old:
the little light sucks a black twig
like dew. Stop shaking, Mr. Branch,
you are not cold.

And still the bloodthirsty question
depends from the pear-shaped leaves:
Why is she not here to greet you,
the silverstemmed Rose of Burgundy,
the Countess on whom it rides?

Where has she rushed that
vaunted pedigree to, where else
to bank it, but here? Well.
Let Her Highness come later
but soon!

Let her coach glide to us
like a spider
under the bald rose of the moon.
Let her delve into the still
hurricane of her heart

and offer
your exhausted mare
a bridle and a sparkling shoe,
a saddle
that blossoms, and redeems.

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Robert Phillips

VARIATIONS ON A WATERCOLOR BY AMY JONES

Someone placed this bouquet upon the waters.
    Casual flowers meant to cheer. Childhood colors:
Pink, yellow, green, blue. Loveable, touching, A starfall.

It is a bridal bouquet tossed away in ecstasy.
    It is a floral tribute never delivered to a talent.
It exists upon a plane beyond ecstasy and talent.

See how it is wrapped in (news?)-paper, floating.
    See how it has nothing to do with news, floating.
See how it is neither above or below, real or unreal.

Surely it is rooted, this bouquet of cut flowers,
    In the feminine soul. But—and do not miss it!—
A sailboat. Small, white, it floats just beyond:

The male force billowing and blossoming. Bouquet and boat,
    Opposites uniting within the celestial light shining,
Within the biggest flower's magical black eye.

Look into the eye of the flower, into the eye
    Of God, the I of God. Bouquet and boat, flower and I,
Real and unreal, male and female, all have become one.

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Rob Wilson

THE FLATLANDS

Here and there, this and that, or you and I—
Where does my mind end and yours begin,
I cannot say this moonlit morning in Honolulu.

You hear these rumors of a flatland
Somewhere in America in the mind,
And you tell me.
A *new* dimension like prairie lowlands
Vaster than the country itself,
But lived in by people like the muse called
Sara with her warehouse eyes.

It's a world elsewhere for sure,
But here, where it has to be—Where?
In the coffin of the third eye,
In the stomach like Uranus swallowed
Before and after we were born?
Ushered out of time and place: please,
Not that again, the fool's Arnheim.

I have all I can do to live from day to day
Without fury or neglect kindly in each second,
Without heroic delusions of blasting off
To another mind, never mind to another realm,
Though it sounds more lovely, O, when you say it.

Should I do penance like they told me
For not taking out the garbage?
Should I cross barbwire to serve her?
Should I do yoga to remember the wordless texts?
Should I live, more simply, like a cow in the grass
Or a bronzed baby in the surf?
These things are unclear to me
This moonlit morning in Honolulu
But I keep on asking about these lowlands
Which you say are near and true.

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Henry Rasof

AN APOCRYPHA

One day I took off my glasses and beheld the world as it is, a new world, what it always was, what it never was. There was a mild euphoria, as I took in the sides of vision I had not seen since I was five, that perhaps I had never seen. And the world that was, that seemed as if it had always been, became a story, to tell my friends.

I felt strange, though, as when in a fever everything is out of focus. All that was was a general outline, a sense of shapes, of forms moving into other forms, without distinctions from each other. As the world became vague I ran out to greet and be greeted by my friends and found the world warm, and soft, and not altogether unbelievable, separated as I was from it by my vision.

The story, as I began its telling, was long and detailed, and I told it over and over. But it was not my story, my own story, nor was it mine to tell, though I was telling it anyway. It was a familiar story, one told before, though not necessarily the same story.

Unable to see me clearly my friends drew near. Unable to see my friends as they drew nearer I let go my eyes and watched my friends interact with each other and with the story as it was being told, the story of a story being told, of seeing in a new kind of way, of friends drawing near, and nearer, to me, to see me, to see me seeing them, if in fact I was seeing them at all, for me to see them, as they were seeing me. I watched something detach from myself, detached from myself, as something detached from myself, as I detached from the world, detaching my self from myself and from the world, detaching from the world I had created, or at least always known, and always, so it seemed, seen, or not seen, however you look at it, entrusting it to my friends, who I no longer could see as I had seen them, as it were. But because it was not my story, my own to tell, I let it all go. I let go the story and threw away my eyes, again and again, until I entered the world, the same world that was, but this time through another entrance. Then I relaxed my hold on my friends, and they came to me, closer than ever before.

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As it was, as it never was, I threw away my glasses and by a quirk of fate saw into the patterns that hold us as we are, that make us what we are, that hold us in and to who we are, that contain us in our vessels, that contain the vessels. And the patterns were full of light, and of darkness, the one generating the other, out of the other: sounds becoming sights and a power between all things, between all living things, between earth and plant, plant and human, star and firmament, between energy and matter, between all that exists, that has ever existed and will ever exist, though not necessarily in its present form. I saw the sides of my vision, that I had not seen since I was five and was five again, and the sight that was, was good. I beheld the world, and the world, as it was, as it is, was good.

John Yau

TEN SONGS

Trying to find a way to say something that would make it make
its sense
Trying to find a way to weigh something that would make its
own lense
Finding it trying to say something they would make a lense of
Finding the saying of something weighing the sense of it trying
Making the trying something that would find its sense
Sensing the making trying to find something it says
Saying the finding is there to find is making it make sense
Making it make sense is finding something to say
Something to say is finding a lense to sense the making
Something making the making something something else

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Two Poems by Jill Hoffman

MOTHER-OF-PEARL

The fountain in her courtyard resurrected
a marble girl I believed had drowned,
Bella, who married Max when she was sixteen
and was mistaken once for his mother.
At eight she supported a family.
She was beautiful, though her stomach rolled
over, and one toe. I was ashamed at Jones
Beach when the children looked in the window
at us naked together, taking a shower.
For years she came back as Dolly, and went away
again, never having heard that my grandfather
remarried. The round horizon of the ocean
this morning is girdled with rainbow.
A blonde perches inquisitively among the dresden branches.

REGRET

Mother, when I dress him
as a woman I love him.
I wish I hadn't thrown away
some of your old girdles.

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Patricia Farewell

NOSTALGIA

Bittern, bittern,
how I love this word
whose meaning I cannot remember.
How I love to tie the years
like stalks into bundles.

Sometimes I miss myself
in a moonlit lake a hundred miles from here
near an unhaunted house to dry off in.
I see old people passing spices
down a table; forks on the left;
knives on the right.

I ran everywhere then.
At birthday parties I somersaulted
down the lawn and let total strangers
comb the grass through my hair.

It's this list I want, though:
    first robbery, lie, dirty picture,
    food binge, death, death, sneaky sex,
    broken bone and poem—

with you leaning forward
to hear all my voices
as I play back my childhood,
happy or unhappy.

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Michael Goldman

THE ACCEPTANCES

No, you cannot understand the acceptances,
how easily they receive each other's talks,
how the lamps are lit as by a faithful reviewer
hurrying home early in the first snowflakes!

Little scenes of the winter tumble past you,
richly colored pages waving and signalling
we once were white. You are their audience,
and your bafflement is like a summer cold.

Every emotion is easy though baffling,
easy as sneezing is every birth and death,
and why shouldn't conversation be easy?
But it is hard to imagine next year's weather

and you find it must be hard to speak.
Into a silence sustained as the muscles in the chest
of a great singer sustain one note and then another
a flash of static reaches with the acuity
of a long strip of paper being torn. The death
which grows up everywhere around you
has its real purpose in approaching.

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Bob Zmuda

LOVE SONG

For love one must risk
everything (it has been said
before)—one must risk everything—
one's faith, one's hope, one's
sanity, one's pride, one's very
life, one's fate—as the
poet must sometimes (you will
not buy this comparison) get
out of bed and begin
to write the poem down,
or it is lost forever.
Everything for love! And if
one loses in that desperate
country, there is always the
shocking slime of life, the
grave earth beneath one's feet!
Or one can take the
fact of one's feet, and
continue to search for love,
unless one is so old
one cannot walk. Either way,
one must die for love.

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BOOKS

SELF-DECENTERED

BAUDELAIRE AND FREUD. By Leo Bersani. University of California Press. $7.95.

Like *A Future for Astyanax,* Leo Bersani's new book is at once an act of literary criticism and an exercise in ideological speculation. As with a good deal of contemporary French criticism, I find myself divided between my gratitude for the fertility of Bersani's method of reading Baudelaire and my mistrust of the values implied or assumed by the method.

Contemporary literature, Bersani reminds us, has celebrated "marginal or partial selves, or to put in another way, a disseminated scattered self which resists all efforts to make a unifying structure of fragmented desire." He reads Baudelaire as a poet who is torn between the modernist idea of a "decentered" self and the more traditional idea of a coherent, "socially-defined time-bound" self. Bersani turns this tension into a dialectic which is intended not only to illuminate the work of Baudelaire but to test the claims of rival conceptions of the self. A disconcerting feature of Bersani's argument (perhaps reflective of its content) is the slipperiness, the instability of his language: "marginal" or "partial" unproblematically changes to "disseminated" and "scattered." Is fragmented desire partial, broken, or frustrated? Why are "decentered" and "time-bound" alternatives? More fundamentally is the disseminated self anything more than an oxymoron, since *self* would seem to presuppose a unity, a center?

Against what he takes to be the conventional use of psychoanalytic criticism, which immobilizes the writer "in certain fixed desires or sexual scenarios," Bersani affirms a psychoanalytic reading "in terms of the mobility of fantasy, of its potential for explosive displacements." The release from a purposive unity into fragmentariness is aesthetically productive. Unity for Bersani's Baudelaire is an opacity that must be shattered for the artist to be open to reality. Thus that vast emptiness which "would fain reduce the earth to ruin/ . . . gladly swallow the world in one gaping yawn" ("Ennui") is cunningly compared by

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Bersani to the "artist's uncontrolled and unreserved openness to other forms of being," suggesting the essential poetic nature of ennui. (One might question whether either emptiness or openness is the ultimate condition of the person suffering from ennui or of the artist. Ennui may be a secondary manifestation of a more terrible emotion: fear raised to the pitch of panic. In *Roland Barthes*, Barthes speaks of panic boredom, which "might be my form of hysteria." If ennui is the expression of fear, then the cultivation of it by the artist is a form of courage to which the antidote may be the poem itself.)

The result of the artist's "openness" may be impotence in the world. But art or modern art is a compensation for the impotence. Bersani characterizes it as "a richly elusive art of shifting tones and heterogeneous images . . . corresponding to 'desire's incessant mobility.'" The qualification modern is important because there was "an aesthetic of completeness" in the nineteenth century in which art was not conceived and experienced at the expense of an active and effective participation in life. Bersani cites Proust as the first great witness of the breakdown of this aesthetic of completeness. According to Bersani, Proust equivocates between two views: that the unity is intrinsic to *La Comédie humane* and Wagner's tetralogy and that it is an invention of the artist, "imposing upon [the work] retrospectively a unity, a greatness which it does not possess." Proust is being used here to support the currently fashionable view that the unitary self is an artificial construction, not a given of individual life. The second view constitutes a subversive and valuable "questioning of general cultural assumptions about the nature of the self and the 'shapes' of human experience." What is left unquestioned are the assumptions about fragmentation and mobility that animate his discourse.

Bersani writes: "The metamorphoses of the woman with the poet's fantasies [as in "Le Serpent qui danse"] create impressive margins of freedom for Baudelaire, margins which allow him not only to avoid being fixed on an impoverishing center within himself, but also to escape any obsessive attachment to the loved one." A confidently centered self, a capacity for an enduring love of another are precipitously and uncritically transvalued into negative terms: fixity, rigidity, impoverishment, and obsessiveness. The risks of the reality principle are made to constitute the essence of the principle, while the risks of the pleasure principle (the sense of transience, emptiness, impoverishment, narcissism) are suppressed. Of course, an immanent criticism must try to capture the experience of marginal freedom in the poet's fantasies and not prematurely "fix" it in a dialectic which would make it

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problematic before it has been enjoyed. Bersani is superb in recapturing the experience. But it has already become problematic and apparently was problematic for Baudelaire. What troubles in Bersani's argument is not its experimental attitude but the strident moralism that is barely concealed by the attitude. Bersani's criticism operates on a double standard. While psychic mobility is presented with *apparent* neutrality, amorally, all attempts at achieving stability are condemned in *moral* terms.

We are told by Bersani after a vivid account of two poems in *Les Fleurs du Mal* ("Le Beau Navire" and "Les Bijoux") of the disintegrative effect of fantasies generated by desire that Baudelaire's sadism "is an attempt to stop the woman from moving, for her movements excite desires which may both endanger her and reduce the poet's identity to a kind of mobile fragmentariness." This danger is asserted neutrally, without alarm—as if Bersani does not wish this perfectly reasonable desire of Baudelaire not to be *reduced* to threaten the opposed view of the fragmentary self as a liberated self. Bersani makes nothing of the reduction of poetic identity. I would suggest that it is precisely Baudelaire's need for sadic immobility that puts in jeopardy the "ethic" of psychic mobility Bersani proposes. The deathlike immobility (achieved through violence toward another, who may be no more than a projection of the feminine[?] portion of the poetic self), may be provoked by an uncontrolled psychic mobility. Biologists have taught us that the body is conservative and desires stability—at least as part of a dialectic in which the other term is adventure.

In his reading of Baudelaire, Bersani tends to associate the ordering or immobilizing tendency in the work with cruelty and a life denying fixity. One is often persuaded by Bersani's ingenious Lacan-influenced readings of individual poems and passages from *Les Journaux Intimes,* but there is a large tendentious implication as in his discussion of realistic fiction that all order is immobility and all scattering pleasure and vitality. (The hero in realistic fiction serves a double purpose. He is "the ideal self whom the narrator seeks to appropriate," and he is "also the rejected [and yet fascinating] possibility of disruptive impulses which might resist being enclosed in any structured totality at all.") The reservations about his "critical adventure" does not inhibit his concluding desire to "expose ourselves once again to Baudelaire's excitingly playful, if risky, adventure in self-scattering and self-displacement." One can't escape the feeling that Bersani has evacuated the terror which Baudelaire must have felt in the experience of *disintegration.*

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Bersani omits from his account the fact of the poem itself as a centripetal force or a more or less stable structure countering the disseminations of desire. In speaking of the self we tend to forget the privileges of the *artistic* self (often illicitly conflated by literary critics with the ordinary self), privileges that make possible the combination in Bersani's phrase of an "esthetic of modernism with a hatred of modern life." Art, as Nietzsche first taught, is with us, so that we may not perish from the truth. The poem itself immobilizes the adventure of displacement and dissemination, providing both the poet and the reader with satisfactions that for the moment arrest desire.

EUGENE GOODHEART

A CATCH OF VIRGINIA WOOLF

WOMAN OF LETTERS: A LIFE OF VIRGINIA WOOLF. By Phyllis Rose. Oxford University Press. $12.95.

THE UNKNOWN VIRGINIA WOOLF. By Roger Poole. Cambridge University Press. $11.95.

THE DIARY OF VIRGINIA WOOLF. Volume II: 1920–1924. Edited by Anne Olivier Bell. Assisted by Andrew McNeillie. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. $12.95.

Of our fascination with Virginia Woolf there is no end. Her stature still grows and with it the need for a more varied perspective than we have had on her life and work. The diaries, the letters, her nephew's biography, the newly discovered fragments of memoir (*Moments of Being*), and the endless recollections of her contemporaries—all give a sense of shutters flung open on one of the most original creative minds in modern literature. At the same time, streams of critical studies, some by feminist scholars, confirm Virginia Woolf as "our contemporary." Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf *now*? The frail, remote, pristine figure of the legend is rapidly fading as she sits for a whole new set of portraits.

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For a generation that cultivates morbidity and takes madness and suicide (especially literary suicide) in its stride, she has acquired a new "relevance." Bloomsbury has aptly been used to "humanize" her. For nothing invites the soul so much these days, it seems, as a common touch of decadence, a sexual aberration or two, and lavish doses of indiscretion and malice. Book after book has revealed the earthier side of that fabulously cultivated community, and Virginia Woolf's aptitude as a disciple has not gone unnoticed.

Now that her palpable "reality" has been demonstrated, her fiction is deemed more comprehensible. In their search for the *real* Virginia Woolf, critics are looking closely at the texts themselves, more often to glean psychic hints from biographical facts than to enhance our appreciation of the novels. The quest has its pitfalls, for the biographically oriented critic too often mistakes the human being for the artist—when in fact the two rarely merge. When Phyllis Rose makes the statement at the beginning of *Woman of Letters: A Life of Virginia Woolf* that she wishes to reverse Woolf's "image as an isolated and somewhat precious technician," she verges on this kind of critical confusion. It is, indirectly, an admission that the novelist's aesthetics does not interest her. But is it possible to write a critical biography of one of the major innovators of the modern novel and scarcely bother with her art? Having in fact chosen to make Virginia Woolf's writings the major source of biographical elucidation, Rose must inevitably interpret the novels. To complicate matters, she is also writing a "thesis" biography. Without stating her dissatisfaction with the official biography of Quentin Bell, she clearly sees in Virginia Woolf's life the possibility of more than a single interpretation: the facts are manipulable. Her purpose in relating the writing to the life is to emphasize Woolf's "resilience," her astonishing productivity. Rose wants to corral the life around a feminist perspective, "taking 'feminist' to refer to a political consciousness which began with reasoning . . . from her own hurt feelings." She has readjusted her critical viewpoint "to allow for personal treatment of vital and immediate problems of identity." How lucky for the reader that she does not strictly follow her resolve! Her sensitivity and taste as a critic save her, in many instances, from the simplifications that strew her path when she seeks a perfect correlation between Virginia Woolf's human needs and her artistic aspirations.

Rose attempts, for instance, to establish a causal relationship between Virginia Woolf's childhood sexual traumas and her fear of male domination as reflected in her asexual or frigid heroines. She thus

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encourages a literal reading of the novels that completely misses their symbolism and obscures the dichotomy Woolf sensed between freedom and communion. But she does succeed to a degree previously unrealized in giving texture to Virginia Woolf's early years. Bell is rarely analytical. Though he tells in detail about the crude sexual advances made on the child Virginia by her half-brother, Gerald, and of her "seduction" in adolescence by her cousin, George Duckworth, he barely suggests the traces of these experiences on the adult Virginia. Nor does his view of the Stephen household as essentially harmonious, with parents who combined brains and beauty between them, invite speculations about adolescent rebellion and feelings of alienation. By evoking those years through Woolf's record of them in "A Sketch of the Past," Rose captures a subjective dimension missing in Bell's biography.

The brains, of course, belonged to Leslie Stephen, agnostic man of letters and dour patriarch whom Rose perceives as "an eminent Victorian remnant against whom the more up-to-date daughters longed to rebel." The beauty belonged to the mother and was both physical and spiritual. It was she who "supported the fabric of their lives," Rose shows, and her early death contributed to another kind of frustration in Virginia. Though she was physically her mother's equal, Virginia could not "rest easy" with her own beauty. Rose reports at some length the novelist's recollection of catching herself in a mirror in full view at age seven and feeling a sense of guilt, a reaction she would later attribute to "a streak of puritanism." But Rose dredges further meaning from the incident by attaching Woolf's comment on the sexual assault made by George, that she would thereafter have recurring dreams in which she saw an animal's face standing next to her in the mirror. This is "the very face of sex," concludes Rose, and an image pivotal to an understanding of the novels: "When Woolf writes about sex in the novels, elements present in this childhood episode are usually repeated—male advances as aggression and exploitation, the woman's chief response a fear of violation and a desire not to be touched, the shame and disgust represented by an animal."

It is interesting to compare these remarks with Virginia Woolf's own cautionary comments about these first memories. "As an account of my life," she writes, "they are misleading because the things one does not remember are as important, perhaps they are more important."

When it comes to the Bloomsbury years, *Woman of Letters* makes too much of the "deprivations" Woolf experienced as a woman

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"in an inner circle of male culture and cultivation." Rose is convinced that her exclusion from Cambridge because of her sex affected Virginia Woolf's self-esteem throughout her life. Moreover, as a young intellectual woman, she was bound to suffer deep frustration in being required to meet social demands in a motherless household. But did "the Victorian game of manners," as Virginia Woolf somewhere facetiously described her social duties, really get in her way? Unease in the absence of a university education may have been behind her endless self-goading to learn Greek, read Plato, Shakespeare, the Russians, etc., but the kind of "resentment" Rose is looking for is absent in Virginia Woolf's own recollections of meetings with men friends. On the whole, the "deprivations" she was so eloquently to expound in "A Room of One's Own" and "Three Guineas" are hard to trace back to her own relationships with Bloomsbury males which, as the letters and diaries reveal, were, if complex, spontaneous and close.

What Rose regrettably leaves out, as Bell before her, is some suggestion of Bloomsbury's importance to Virginia Woolf intellectually, the impact of its philosophy and aesthetics on her art. It is ironic in a book purporting to honor Woolf as a woman of letters, that there is no trace of intellectual "background." It is in part Rose's limitation as a feminist critic, suspicious of Woolf as "a technician," that she can see no link between belief and literary art other than feminism.

In a way that is rigid and limiting, every Woolf heroine in her hands from Rachel Vinrace in *The Voyage Out* to Miss La Trobe in *Between the Acts* becomes an incipient feminist in search of "the primacy of the self." But one at least, Mrs. Dalloway, wiggles out of her grasp; unable to fix that tremulous, ambivalent sensibility into a feminist mold, Rose improvises her true quality: ". . . the comedy is loving. This is the creativity of everyday feminine life. The goal is connection, establishing relationships rather than monuments." One has doubts about Katherine Hilbery's "feminism," too: how much sense of self can the heroine of *Night and Day* have when she is unsure at the novel's end which of her many "selves" the man she is marrying will see? Most difficult of all to accept is Rose's suggestion that the most poetic of Woolf's novels, *To the Lighthouse*, actually contains a feminist text. Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay exemplify the writer's "continued ambivalence toward her parents and her sense of the threat they posed to her identity." Furthermore, in pitting Mrs. Ramsay, "that gracious and beautiful example of self-sacrificing femininity," against the aloof and self-centered artist, Lily Briscoe, Woolf offers "a revealing exploration of autonomy . . . the giving necessary to marriage and the non-giving necessary to art." Such a reading violates our awareness of the

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novel's larger symbolism and unity of design. It contradicts, too, Rose's own important insight that the novels are made of "wholes."

Because she does not follow the writer's development from novel to novel, Rose remains curiously unresponsive to the philosophical-aesthetic fusion Virginia Woolf seeks in the later works. Passing too quickly over *The Waves*, she admonishes the novelist for abandoning "the self in the thirties . . . embracing impersonality and anonymity." "For a writer whose greatest impact," she continues, "derives from a private understanding of life's precariousness, the escape from the personal meant cutting herself off from the roots of her art." But were "the roots of her art" what Rose calls "the principle of self-consciousness"? Or had she, in fact, been aware all along of larger connections and sur-realities which she could comprehend only when she finally distanced herself from her creations?

The Unknown Virginia Woolf, by Roger Poole, is an idolater's book, written from a post-Freudian perspective and generally so wrong-headed and irritating that few will persist in reading it to the end. Poole's claim that no evidence exists for Virginia Woolf's madness is based on the psychologist R.D. Laing's premise that irrational behavior can be explained when analyzed with the patient's inner logic in mind. Since in these terms Virginia Woolf's behavior is "explicable," the application of the word "insane" to her severe breakdowns becomes an affront.

Like Rose, Poole is indebted for fresh material to Jeanne Schulkind's collection, *Moments of Being*, and like her he regards Woolf's fiction as "records of a life," seeing in her work the most reliable accounts of her so-called madness. What a critic might call her art becomes for Poole her therapy. "The novels were written," he contends, "to master people and states of mind and states of embodiment which had previously mastered her."

The villain of the piece is Leonard Woolf, "outsider," Jew, and professional rationalist, who readily accepted the verdict of hardened and ignorant medical men, decided his wife must remain childless, sent her off to a nursing home when she attempted suicide, and watched her mercilessly thereafter for signs of "illness." The most damaging evidence against Leonard is that Virginia Woolf's second episode of "madness," accompanied by attempted suicide after she learned of her diagnosis, came soon after their marriage in 1912. Like a prosecuting attorney, Poole doggedly pursues Leonard with vague charges of insensitivity, intellectual conceit, and neuroticism stemming from social and racial antagonisms (as viewed through his little-known

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novel, *The Wise Virgins*). "Now this is the man that Virginia married," is Poole's ominous pronouncement.

But Virginia as "victim" is even less believable than Virginia as repressed feminist. Mrs. Woolf herself in her rational moments (which was most of the time) never doubted that her husband was acting in her behalf. "I think of you and want you . . . you have given me the best things in life," she wrote to him from her retreat. The recriminations, speculative at best, contribute nothing to our understanding of the part that Virginia Woolf's mental and spiritual states played in the development of her art. Ultimately *The Unknown Virginia Woolf* sinks under the author's delusion that strictly subjective evidence offers a greater guarantee of the truth than evidence garnered from observation.

A chronicle of artistic growth dominates the second volume of Virginia Woolf's *Diary*. In 1920 she has reached the age of thirty-eight and is beginning to recognize her poetic sense of life, which she speaks of as her "soul." The years 1920–1924 are crucial in her development as a writer: she has completed a short story volume, *Monday or Tuesday*, is at work on *Jacob's Room*, and is gestating a new kind of novel, tentatively titled *The Hours*, which is to become *Mrs. Dalloway*. Whatever disenchantment and pain life has brought her, on her thirty-eighth birthday she acknowledges being "a great deal happier than I was at twenty-eight; and happier today than I was yesterday having this afternoon arrived at some idea of a new form for a new novel." It will have "no scaffolding; scarcely a brick to be seen; all crepuscular, but the heart, the passion, the humor, everything bright as fire in the midst."

Living in Richmond now, away from "the Atheneum world with its reviews, editions, lunches & tittle-tattle," she is aware of an altered relationship to Bloomsbury. At one function she attends, she notes: "the quality gone; raucous common sense; serious literary criticism & what annoyed me every attempt of a different sort snuffed out directly." Yet she admits: "I grow weary of 'going out to tea' and I can't resist it. To leave a door shut that might be open is in my eye some sort of blasphemy." She enjoys a night spent with her sister in Charleston and records: "Leonard came over next day & found me neither suicidal nor homicidal." But a month later, on the first day of winter, her mood has changed: "Why is life tragic; so like a little strip of pavement over an abyss. I look down; I feel giddy; I wonder how I am ever to walk to the end. . . . And with it all," the entry ends, "how happy I am."

She announces in the summer of 1922 that "Leonard and I are becoming celebrities. . . . I found myself thinking of fame & seeing

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doors open before me." At the same time, having finished *Jacob's Room*, she is reading again (Sophocles and Euripides in Greek), "struggling with Henry James's ghost stories for *The Times*," preparing an article on Hardy and putting together her critical essays in *The Common Reader*. All along *Mrs. Dalloway* is brewing, and she is trying to learn Russian. The combination of feverish work and social activity (apparently unimpeded by Leonard) brings on a short bout of her illness. She recovers.

As she moves toward artistic self-awareness, a Keatsian sense of death in life makes her acutely responsive to moments of "sheer beauty . . . beauty superabounding so that one almost resents it, not being capable of catching it all & holding it all at the moment." She feels "extraordinary emotions." ". . . I have to control my excitement—as if I were pushing through a screen . . . What this portends I don't know. It is a general sense of the poetry of existence that overcomes me . . . I have a sense of the flight of time; and this shores up my emotions."

Having discovered her identity as a writer, she resolves to think no more about fame: "I am to write what I like; & they're to say what they like." One could call this her feminism, but it really has to do with her discovery of her art. "I have found out how to begin (at forty) to say something in my own voice & that interests me so much I feel I can go ahead without praise." The creative need turns her inward, for she is forging a new way of seeing.

When she turns to her fiction now, she is in her element: "I feel my force flow straight from me at its fullest . . . free use of the faculties means happiness." Nor is she timid before her ambition: "In this book [*Mrs. Dalloway*], I have almost too many ideas. I want to give life & death, sanity & insanity; I want to criticize the social system & show it at work, at its most intense. . . ." She is not sure that the absence of a "reality gift" in her fiction is a flaw. "I insubstantize, willfully to some extent, distrusting reality—its cheapness." When she returns to the topic of the soul, she speaks of its "violent moods." "How describe them, even with a waking mind? I think I grow more and more poetic. Perhaps I restrained it & now, like a plant in a pot, it begins to crack the earthenware."

Her art has given her psychic strength, and as she reaches the end of *Mrs. Dalloway*, she affirms this new awareness: "It is poetry I want now . . . I want the concentration & the romance, the words all glued together, fused, glowing. . . ." She no longer feels the need to shuttle back and forth between life and art: "How entirely I live in my

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imagination! how completely depend upon spurts of thought coming as I walk, as I sit; things churning up in my mind & so making a perpetual pageant, which is to me my happiness." *Mrs. Dalloway* has left her "plunged deep in the richest strata of my mind. I can write & write now: the happiest feeling in the world."

It is the *Diaries* in the end that fling the shutters open, suggesting in the evolving artist they reveal the multi-faceted woman.

NONA BALAKIAN

AUTOBIOGRAPHIZING

BETWEEN EXISTENTIALISM AND MARXISM. By Jean-Paul Sartre. Translated by John Mathews. Pantheon. $10.

LIFE/SITUATIONS: ESSAYS WRITTEN AND SPOKEN. By Jean-Paul Sartre. Translated by Paul Auster and Lydia Davis. Pantheon. $8.95.

Jean-Paul Sartre continues to add to the file which he opened with the 1964 publication of his autobiography, *The Words*. At the time, those who expected that the philosopher-writer would reveal secrets of his adult life were doubtless disappointed by the self-portrait of his childhood. For the philosopher whose task is to "situate" the individual, *The Words* could at most be the first gesture. Yet in this account of the early years, much of his mature thought is present—albeit in an oblique and barely explicit form. By 1964, Sartre's thought had already undergone a significant revision from his early theory of consciousness. The young boy's "fundamental project" of becoming a writer is revealed in *The Words* as an autobiographizing which incorporates a theory of individual action as conditioned by, but attempting to overcome, social institutions and social class.

The generations of "existentialists" who formulated their self-understanding on the basis of *Being and Nothingness* (1943) or its literary variations, i.e., *Nausea* (1938), *The Flies* (1943), *No Exit* (1945),

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Dirty Hands (1948), and *The Roads to Freedom* novels (1945-1949), have not—in many instances—caught up with the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960). Even though the English translation is sixteen years after the fact, courses and studies on Sartre continue to emphasize the earlier thought. The English language publication of interviews with Sartre—i.e., "The Purposes of Writing" (1959) and "The Itinerary of a Thought" (1969) in *Between Existentialism and Marxism*, and "Self-Portrait at Seventy" (1975), "Simone de Beauvoir Interviews Sartre" (1975), and "On *The Idiot of the Family*" (1971) in *Life/Situations*—will do more for those seeking to follow his philosophic-literary-political career than the whole series of minimally substantive remarks that have appeared here and there. Above all, these interviews help to complete the more systematic autobiographical account which Sartre himself has offered in *The Words*.

In *Life/Situations*, we learn that music has played a major role in Sartre's experience: he used to listen to jazz extensively before the war; he once composed a sonata; and he likes composers such as Beethoven (his favorite), Chopin, and Schumann, but also Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern. An interview in *Le Monde* (July 1977) adds that, until his recent blindness, he played the piano from two to four hours a day. The conclusion of *Nausea* would have been a good clue that music is central to Sartre's world. There Roquentin listens to the juke box and finds harmony with unknown individuals far off in New York. But Sartre admits that he was never very fond of concert hall music: "Music is made to be listened to by each person individually."

When making a plea for intellectuals in *Between Existentialism and Marxism*, he offers an account on his own behalf: the tools necessary for self-knowledge include Marxism, sociology, and psychoanalysis, but the "unique adventure," the "particularity of the individual," "the singular universal"—these characterize the individual in his efforts at communication. He describes his personal circumstances: grandson of a doctor on one side and of a teacher on the other, petty bourgeois son of a naval officer, fatherless throughout life, etc. What we learn from the interview entitled "Itinerary of a Thought" is that he does not expect much interest in a sequel to *The Words*. The concern was to study "how a man becomes someone who writes, who wants to speak of the imaginary." On this basis, he wrote his biographies of Genet and Flaubert. Since *The Words* fulfills Sartre's program, we should not look for more. And yet *Life/Situations* resembles a sequel to *The Words*. By altering the genre to that of the interview, Sartre opens up a new channel: he gives himself license to reveal that he has little

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interest in readers' letters, that he has not been disappointed by anything in life, that his attitudes toward women have changed even though he has always considered Simone de Beauvoir his equal, that the Flaubert study is a generalized attack upon all bourgeois families, that an intellectual must give everything to the people, that his political texts do not go far enough since they are not fully understood by the popular audience. . . .

The political essays in both of these volumes are chronicles. They recount the injustices of genocide in Vietnam along with the dangers of American imperialism. They demonstrate despair over the degeneration of Soviet socialism following the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia. They decry the reactionary features of institutionalized modes of thought as exhibited by the French Communist party. They argue in favor of decentralization as the only useful response to a centralized government which promotes colonization. They justify the threefold Maoist slogans: "violence, spontaneity, morality." They plead for the liberation of popular ethics and justice. And they criticize the electoral process as already a manifestation of seriality and its reduction of individuals to powerlessness. All these essays describe symptoms of a contemporary social malaise that remains largely implicit in Western political life. But Sartre's assessments are highly personalized and for the most part ancillary to his more general philosophical and intellectual positions. These essays will be read for their contribution to his thought in general—they stand on their own only as historical documents.

One cannot look to these two volumes for any kind of systematic philosophical statement. The only possible exception is a 1964 piece entitled "Kierkegaard: The Singular Universal." But since a translation of the piece appeared a few years ago in a collection of essays on Kierkegaard, edited by Josiah Thompson, some readers will already know it. The appeal to "lived experience" recounts an epistemological "comprehension" which gives meaning to the paradoxical multiplicity of the singularized universal, i.e., the individual. This is one of Sartre's most effective short statements, but like all of the studies under review, its significance depends upon some knowledge of Sartre's thought in general.

Certain readers will find the studies of Mallarmé and Tintoretto intriguing. The latter essay is valuable because it reminds us—lest we forget his earlier piece on Giacometti—that Sartre is also an art critic. For some reason (which may be found in the 1947 *What is Literature?*), Sartre does not write informatively about poets: his *Baudelaire* is a

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minor accomplishment when compared to *Saint Genet* or *The Idiot of the Family*. Two other studies show Sartre's reservations about and amusement at current psychoanalytic praxis. They reiterate his ongoing critique of psychoanalytic perspectives, extending back to the time of *Being and Nothingness*. Together all these essays demonstrate the diversity of Sartre's genius. With the addition of *Sartre on Theatre* (Pantheon, 1976), which includes the author's various interpretations and anecdotes about his own plays, they display the full spectrum of his intellectual concerns.

On the popular American scene, where Sartre is still regarded as a major figure of the third quarter of the twentieth century, some dismay comes over the reader of a *New York Times Magazine* article (14 August 1977) on a mathematical logician whose greatest achievement is to be incomprehensible (in both act and will) to the larger reading public—and even to most philosophers. In that article, which is both a biographical sketch of Saul Kripke and a sociological picture of American philosophy, the author points out that an alternative branch of philosophy has followed the "affairs of the heart by overlooking the limits of reason." "This line includes the existentialists, political philosophers, and phenomenologists—forever in dispute going in and out of style." He cites specifically Marx, Nietzsche, and Sartre as the principal proponents of this line. To assert that Sartre, for one, follows the heart and overlooks the limits of reason is to misread Pascal's dictum that "the heart has reasons which reason does not know at all." Furthermore, *Being and Nothingness* and the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*—Sartre's two major philosophical works—are unquestionably within the limits of reason and the rationalist tradition. A rational treatment of topics such as the emotions, the imagination, political commitment, or social interaction does not mean that reason has been exceeded—unless reason is narrowly defined by a style of analysis that relies solely upon symbolized formulas and a specific type of logical argumentation.

Sartre has made no contribution to mathematical logic, but should this necessarily place him outside the "mainstream" of philosophy? In 1966, the *Times Magazine* published an article by Lewis Feuer entitled "American Philosophy is Dead." There Feuer despaired over the disappearance of true philosophers such as James, Dewey, and Royce. Sartre is among the philosophers who embody the principle to which Feuer pointed—that philosophy truly lives when it takes its place among the other domains of human knowledge, including literature, political theory, psychology, sociology, art, history, and religion. As

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Between Existentialism and Marxism and *Life/Situations* attest, philosophy can still address the full range of basic human concerns in a serious way. Philosophical theory has no home unless it can be practiced and its practice must have meaning not only for those who engage in it but also for those to whom it is addressed. Although Sartre can no longer be followed in each and every tenet, he can be looked to as a symbol of what is significant in philosophical activity.

The essays in *Between Existentialism and Marxism* and *Life/Situations* are drawn from the last three volumes of Sartre's series entitled *Situations I–X* (1947–1976). Spanning almost thirty years, the series marks the enormous role Sartre has played in recent Western thought. All the major issues and developments of our time are there to remind us where we have been and what we as human beings can do tomorrow.

HUGH J. SILVERMAN

THE MIND'S EYE

PASSAGES IN MODERN SCULPTURE. By Rosalind E. Krauss. The Viking Press. $18.95.

Rosalind Krauss, immensely gifted with an instinct for driving metaphor, is one of the most eloquent and frequently elegant interpreters of modern art (and particularly modern sculpture, as her earlier book, *Terminal Iron Works: The Sculpture of David Smith,* has already made clear). But even more miraculously Krauss is a thinker. This particular miracle deserves our grateful appreciation on its own count, but it also puts us on guard. It is as thinker, rather than as critic or historian, that I regard her and write of her here. But having admitted this, I must protect myself immediately from the charge of condescension. Not condescension at all! It is only that to regard Krauss as an important thinker about art will for some discredit her as critic (since the task of criticism is seen by many as not an intellective but an iterative occupation, a process of gathering examples and

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notations) or as historian (since for many the practice of art history does not allow for leaps of intuition).

The problem of *Passages in Modern Sculpture* lies precisely in the fact that its author appears to be intimidated by the debased condition of the critical establishment. Art criticism, as presently practiced, is by and large murky, pretentious, and ideological, without historical reference much before the middle of the nineteenth century (and then only for the sake of a little Nadar, Manet, and the French poets), with little philosophy except what is distilled by the most up-to-date European thinkers. The snobbism is egregious, the vocabulary hopeless, the syntax of critical address virtually unintelligible. The magazines and reviews that cater to critical discourse hardly edit.

The rise and triumph of formalist criticism—that retreat from the imagination which dominates America's art history departments and critical sensibility—sets for itself only a limited expectation: tell what is there before the eye, describe how it is made and where it differs from previous *exempla*, and delineate its connection with what has been and might come into being (Note: make its decretals general and tenuous, since form and history are separate and frequently noncommunicating disciplines). Formalist critics review works of art as if for *Consumer Reports*—deadpan, without feeling, certainly without locating the work in a tradition beyond slogan or movement. The formalist critical posture is indispensable as a means of setting down with minimum risk of misrepresentation what is before the eye; but it also mires the work, preventing it from moving into a larger discourse where it might be connected with other modes of plastic expression, with other media of perception, even with a renovation and reconception of the nature of seeing itself. Formalism is our own bed of Procrustes—the work of art is broken to fit or else cut down to the critic's size.

Rosalind Krauss both resists formalism and succumbs. The opening essay on the matrix of the argument, the difficulties of the rationalist presupposition in an iconic age, where the work of art—like language—stimulates, points, marks out, moves by indirection and stealth, is brilliant and suggestive. She carries this further, moving forwards and backwards, destroying artificial historical chronology by treating the reader to an exposition of the issue of narrative time in sculpture that shows how Eisenstein's cinematics are adumbrated in Rodin; but where Eisenstein makes clear that the surface is the depth, everything virtual and before the eye, Rodin seeks to imply a depth prior to our experience of the work. The issue, set forth quietly and with her own guile, is whether the experience of sculpture entails an a

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priori vulnerability to space and time (whether these are, in fact, noumenal presumptions of reason, the essential form in which all experience of the objective world is cast, and hence prior to experience and prior to the making of objects to be experienced) or whether the Kantian idealist mode is not simply, as Hegel might have said, *aufgehoben*, obliterated in transcendence, but rendered meaningless and irrelevant by a change in vocabulary and problematics. Krauss is brilliant but a trifle cowardly; it is all there, implicit, but *we* are obliged—virtually unaided—to pare it from the bone.

Why not say straight out that something has gone wrong with the critical language? Perhaps the reason for her pusillanimity is that her opening chapter is followed in many successive chapters by a rehearsal of the course of modern sculpture in which every historical base is methodically touched, every major movement and innovation scrutinized, every sculptor of importance identified and exemplified and those she cannot fit to movement or *Tendenz*, simply ignored. Rosalind Krauss leads the reader from Rodin to the minimalist art of the late sixties and seventies by a route of indirection. I have called it a pusillanimous strategy only because I think Krauss one of the very few critical minds able to stare down the lion in its lair, doing in formalism by employing formalist criteria to undermine its premises. In part she succeeds, which is why I admire *Passages in Modern Sculpture*: her discussion of Duchamp's readymades connects with the "happenings" of the sixties and the rhetoric of Carl Andre's seeming readymades (although I would call them "manufactures") in a way that is not only suggestive but deformalizing in the interest of a breadth of intuitive connection. Unfortunately, the middle of her book consists of too many set pieces, readings of works wholly familiar, oeuvres fully documented, and dilations on works not experienced directly (such as Talin's corner sculptures, which are *de rigueur*, although known only from poor installation photographs). The advance marked by *Passages in Modern Sculpture* is in the opening and concluding chapters, where the real energy of Krauss's intelligence and philosophic curiosity overwhelms her submission to the procedures of her generation. In these chapters, where the passion for the intuition and formulation of the new space of minimalist sculpture is defined, the prospect of critical intelligence as philosophic intelligence is reasserted and the hope is reaffirmed that reasoning about the plastic arts can become as suggestive and ultimately theologic as the writings about literature and culture of Walter Benjamin, Jacques Derrida, or Lévi-Strauss have become.

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The situation of modern man, in the aftermath of every conceivable breakdown, disarray, and *hubris*, is the loss of an art of meaning. The artist, the man of letters, even the philosopher, can hardly pretend to reoffer works of significant symbolism and illumination, employing narrative time and circumambient volumes to suggest an orderly, stable, and evocative system of truths in the world of painting and sculpture. Each of the theoreticians of the new space compels us to engage a new vocabulary for space, a language which obliterates connections with privacy, with the secret self, with interior estates. These new sculptors in a sense abolish the Renaissance and the liberated self which it engendered. They reaffirm a sober, unemphatic, impersonal space in which immortality is once again possible, in which questions of eternity are again raised, in which art regains the mythic and the theological.

ARTHUR A. COHEN

THE YOUNG MANHOOD OF JAMES T. FARRELL

JAMES T. FARRELL: THE REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST YEARS. By Alan M. Wald. New York University Press. $15.

In April 1937, John Dewey, then seventy-eight, arrived in Coyoacan, Mexico, to interview Leon Trotsky, comaker with Lenin of the Bolshevik Revolution and a more gifted writer than Dewey, the philosopher, and a more brilliant dialectician. Trotsky had saved the Revolution in its early months by putting together an army under impossible conditions and by instituting a Red Terror that ruthlessly destroyed the immediate opposition, both Left and Right.

Now that Trotsky was a romantic exile with only words as weapons, his admirers forgot the terror and made the Old Man, in James T. Farrell's words, the "Marxist conscience of the World," an Ariel to Stalin's Caliban. Admirers dominated the American Commit-

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tee for Defense of Leon Trotsky, of which Farrell was a member, and which had sent a commission, headed by Dewey, to hear Trotsky's rebuttal of the charges made against him in the Moscow show trials. In startling confessions, Old Bolsheviks had accused Trotsky of conspiring with them and with Germany and Japan to destroy the Soviet Union. Much of the evidence was clearly impossible on the face of it. The Commission published a book-length report, written by Suzanne LaFollette, entitled *Not Guilty.*

Farrell had been kept off the Commission as irresponsible, but being then at the height of his reputation and influence, went along anyway. His Studs Lonigan trilogy, published two years before, had been a huge success. The even more ambitious Danny O'Neill series was well under way. Bubbling over with ideas and satiric inventions, Farrell appeared in a diversity of journals, a gleeful gadfly stinging the literary Left and Right alike.

What brought Farrell to Coyoacan, what followed from it, and how Deweyism and Trotskyism warred in Farrell's soul during his intensely political decade from 1934 to 1944, make the substance of this short book. Alan M. Wald, himself something of a Trotskyist, thinks that the "other side" of Farrell, the political side, has been too much neglected by students of his fiction. In any event Wald's scholarly reconstruction is apposite, now that there is a good deal of nostalgic interest, most of it wrong-headed, in the Left politics of that time.

Farrell came by his Deweyism naturally. A born Chicagoan, he studied Dewey, Veblen, and George Herbert Mead at the University of Chicago, where they had all been teachers. Dewey himself had gone on to Columbia University in 1903, the year before Farrell was born, and worked much later with Sidney Hook, Max Eastman, Corliss Lamont, and Meyer Schapiro, all of whom were to be important in the political milieu that Farrell entered when he came to New York in 1932. At Chicago, Farrell had also read some Nietzsche, and been fascinated by the French Revolution. He had thought of giving up fiction and becoming a philosopher.

In the summer of 1934, Farrell met George Novack at Yaddo, where Novack, soon to become a leading Trotskyist, had found himself "the lone oppositionist amidst thirteen Communist members or sympathizers." Farrell formed with Novack the same sort of intense intellectual friendship that he was already having with Meyer Schapiro. Both his mentors were members of a revolutionary club organized by Sidney Hook, which included among its members (Wald loves names) Lewis Corey, Diana Trilling, George S. Counts, Felix Morrow,

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James Burnham, Reinhold Niebuhr, Herbert Solow, Corliss Lamont, and Waldo Frank. George Novack urged Wald to write this book, and he and Farrell supplied much of the documentation.

Nineteen thirty-four was a crucial year for the Left. The Comintern's "Third Period" of leftist sectarianism had ended disastrously in the triumph of Hitler. Now Russia reversed itself, joined the League of Nations, and supported a Popular Front government in France. In the United States, the Communists jettisoned the revolutionary John Reed Clubs and substituted the anti-fascist League of American Writers, designed to appeal to a broader range of better-known writers. The Spanish Civil War made recruitment easy. Significantly, the only requirement, apart from being anti-Hitler, was to refrain, "in the interest of unity," from any criticism of Stalin and the Soviet Union.

As a successful Irish-American novelist of proletarian ancestry, Farrell seemed to the Communists an ideal person for co-option. He spoke at the League's first congress, wrote for the *New Masses*, the *Daily Worker*, and the *Partisan Review* (which started as a John Reed Club organ). But he took advantage of his desirability to indulge freely in irreverence, belligerence, and bibulousness. He made fun of the leading leftist playwright, Clifford Odets, and attacked the Party's prize proletarian novelist, Jack Conroy. Granville Hicks called Farrell "Peck's bad boy."

The uneasy alliance with the Communists did not last long. In *A Note on Literary Criticism*, published in 1936, Farrell claimed that of all those theorizing about literature and political action, including his collaborators on several journals, only Marx and he had the right slant—were not mechanists or dualists—and that even Marx got his metaphysics wrong. Then later in that year, Farrell helped organize the committee to defend Trotsky.

This was the unpardonable sin. To show the least doubt of Trotsky's guilt was to impugn the Soviet Union and "play into the hands of Max Eastman and Sidney Hook," which "objectively," as the Party put it, meant aiding the Nazis. Under such C.P. pressure, Freda Kirchway, editor of *The Nation*, resigned from the defense committee, and some fifty writers and artists who should have known better, including Max Lerner, Theodore Dreiser, and Lillian Hellman, signed a statement for the *New Masses* warning liberals against Dewey's committee.

Farrell remained intransigent. After the Nazi-Soviet pact he tried to get *The Nation* and *The New Republic* to admit that they had been wrong in their protectiveness toward Stalinism. He was among the

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handful of intellectuals—including Meyer Schapiro, Mary McCarthy, and Edmund Wilson—who stood out against the war after 1941. In *The League of Frightened Philistines* he attacked Van Wyck Brooks, Archibald MacLeish, and Bernard De Voto, who were as severe as the Stalinists about decadent or pessimistic literature, in the name of patriotism and winning the war.

In 1941 Farrell threw himself into the defense of the leaders of the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party brought to trial under the Smith Act, the first peacetime federal prosecution for sedition in American history. They had taken the 4000-member Minneapolis Teamsters Union out of the AFL and got it to oppose Roosevelt's war preparations. Though Farrell and Dos Passos, among others, vigorously rallied support, the Trotskyists were sent to jail.

This was the high point of Farrell's activism. He was alienated by the factional squabbles among Trotsky's followers after their leader was murdered, and gradually cooled toward Marxism itself. By 1948 he favored the Marshall Plan, because "Only American wealth and power stands in the way of Stalinist expansion." Later he became chairman of the anti-Communist Committee for Cultural Freedom.

What were the consequences for Farrell and for American writers generally of these passionate and contentious involvements? It is almost as if they had never occurred.

In *Literature and Morality*, 1947, Farrell included six appreciative essays on Napoleon, Tolstoy, and Tolstoy's capacity for historical imagination. But in his own fiction after that time, history and philosophies of history became merely something for characters to talk about. They are not dramatized forces which take over and inform the novels as they did with Dos Passos and Malraux. Farrell's scores of books in the last three decades—readable but repetitious—depended largely on memories of his earlier years for their unifying principle. And though Farrell defended Joyce and other experimenters in style and form against philistines, his own fiction, often published in unrevised first draft, remained almost totally without formal or stylistic interest.

Farrell was hardly alone in not integrating or building upon the experience of the ten years with 1939 at their center, though of all the major writers at that time, his view of the political Left was probably the most independent, clear sighted, and courageous. American exceptionalism, as it used to be called, makes the preoccupations of those years seem to most people distant aberrations. Even the brief radicalism of the late sixties failed to revive the old dogmatisms. Writers are

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sensitive to events in Israel, and sign unideological statements supporting dissidents in the Soviet Union, but most intellectuals are hardly aware of the existence of the tiny Communist factions still existing in this country, and are wholly indifferent to the particular positions they may be taking at the moment. Marxism, though it has several quarterlies devoted to it, is quite literally an academic subject. It is hard to imagine fifty writers signing a manifesto because of some impermissible phrase used by J. Hillis Miller or even Gore Vidal.

Past passions seem to be revived only in reference to that past, as in Hilton Kramer's savage onslaught against Vivian Gornick's *The Romance of American Communism*, or in *The Nation*'s bitter campaign against Allen Weinstein's *Perjury*. It is the virtue of Alan Wald's committed scholarship that he is able, as Farrell in his later writing was not, to make the distant events in which Farrell played a generally noble role, become a presently relevant chapter in a total and continuing historic process.

ROBERT GORHAM DAVIS

DROUGHT AND FLOOD

SPHERE: THE FORM OF A MOTION. By A.R. Ammons. Norton. $6.95.

LADY OF THE BEASTS. By Robin Morgan. Random House. $3.95.

GINKGO. By Felix Pollak. The Elizabeth Press. $8.

In the tiny yet paradigmatic world of American Poetry, consider the polarization. Poetry by men grows every year more perfect, more formalist, more intellectual, while the women's movement encourages a poetry which is every year more emotional, more visceral, more personal. We may have all bridle and no horse, or all horse and no bridle. This exaggerates the case, but keep it in mind.

A. R. Ammons began by publishing in the early 1950s lovely poems about his relationship with nature, usually in a lyric-narrative

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mode, often involving discourse with trees, birds, sun and moon, not excluding dryads and angels. From the start, Ammons had more knowledge about natural phenomena than any poet in sight, but the knowledge was absorbed by the psychodrama. Alexander Pope would have called this kind of treatment of nature "fancy's maze." Like many other pastoral poets, Ammons has stooped or risen to truth and philosophized his song, seeking rational grounds for his initial sense of natural magic. The massive *Collected Poems,* which deservedly won a National Book Award in 1973, follows a trajectory from the gifted insight toward meditation upon the insight.

Ammons's *Sphere* is clearly a major undertaking: a long, scrupulously though unsystematically philosophical poem, in a tradition which springs from Wordsworth and Whitman, through Stevens's *Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction,* in which the protagonist is the poet's mind, and the task in hand is to define, through unguided meditation, the connection between macrocosm and microcosm in a seemingly secular universe. *Sphere* ponders, among other matters, the human cycle of life and death, where it fits into nature's, where earth fits into the solar system, it into the galaxy, galaxy into universe; what in the nature of things is the imagination, where does it come from, what can we hope of it; what is poetry, what are the gods, chaos, creation; how may we find, beyond survival, salvation, and beyond individual consciousness, "joy's surviving radiance." Ammons comes on hardheaded, therefore more credible than most, about matters of the spirit. In the poem's overture, he describes the embodyings and disembodyings of the mind, philosophy's process, as digestion:

2

Often those who are not good for much else turn to thought
and it's just great, part of the grand possibility, that
thought is there to turn to: camouflagy thought flushed

out of the bush, seen vaguely as potential form, and
pursued, pursued and perceived, declared: the savored
form, the known possession, knowledge carnal knowledge:

the seizure, the satiation: the heavy jaguar takes the
burro down for a foreleg or so: then, the lighter,
though still heavy, vultures pull and gulp: then, the

tight-bodied black crows peck and scratch: then ants
come out and run about the structure, picking bits:
finally, least bacteria boil the last grease mild:

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3

so the lessening transformers arrive at the subtle condition
fine, the spiritual burro braying free, overwhelming
the hairy, and so must we all approach the fine . . .

A shade beneath metaphysics, for the literary connoisseur, *Sphere* offers a multitude of ticklish little pleasures. A playful meditation on "the one-many problem" seen as an isosceles triangle (cf. Shelley, "The One remains, the many change and pass") works itself out sexually and still more playfully (cf. T. S. Eliot):

If one can get far enough this way where imagination
and flesh strive together in shocking splendors, one can
forget that sensibility is sometimes dissociated and come:

Shortly thereafter, a Berrymanish drop:

man hawking order and clarity; but if he would not

be dark, what a brightness! though I am not enjoying the
first day of spring very much, it is not with me as it is
with my friend George, spending his first spring in the grave:

Then a Whitmany yawp:

windbaggery, snag-gaggling, yakety-yak, fuss:

A little later, a snipe at Snyder:

those so minded who would not prefer
to be out regarding waves: bogus ecstaticus: hocus focus:

For the naturalist and the do-it-yourselfer, the poem includes a season cycle, birds, bugs and animals, a garden, advice on digging a well, on draining a swamp. For anyone impatient with the hostility of humanists toward scientists, Ammons's familiarity with technical fields from mathematics and astronomy to biophysics and geology, and points between, should be as exhilarating as a hike above the treeline on a day flooded with sunlight.

As to formal mastery, *Sphere* is a wonder, like driving in high gear nonstop from Atlantic to Pacific. The long-line stanza, in its four-stanza canto units, the rhythms unflagging, holds, and holds. The

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syntax suspended—*Sphere* has no full stops before the last line, only colons—keeps us moving, and is the perfect device for reminding us that the energies of process and change never cease, either in the external world or in the world of the mind. The diction is efficient, makes room for neologisms lofty and slangy, occasionally descends (rather stiffly and self-consciously, which is the poem's only "flaw") to the raunchy, and never sentimentalizes.

And yet the poem seems relentlessly dry, bloodless, unemotional—to a degree obviously exceeding both Whitman and Frost, with whom Ammons is reasonably compared; and I would say even exceeding Stevens, in whom the skin of abstraction is always thin enough to let us see his terror of mortality, his pleasure in the sensuous, his passionate lifelong wrestle between the truth of imagination and the truth of reality, pulsing beneath. The abstract and the theoretical dominate *Sphere* severely, drainingly. Idea replaces image. Discussion of feeling replaces expression of feeling. Things repeat. Can poetic control be too much of a good thing? I do not like to think so; perhaps it is a question of balance; nevertheless, invited to watch the true and beautiful machinery of this man's intelligence, I feel something like Sydney's Astrophel about a comparably platonic sort of contact: "But still Desire cries, give me some food."

A woman writer today has one advantage: the possibility of originality, if she chooses to examine experiences central to her sex, and to find the style necessary to express such experiences. "Follow, poet, follow right/To the bottom of the night," says Auden in the *Elegy for W. B. Yeats*. When a woman descends into her own night, dives into her own wreck, she should make discoveries valuable to us all.

One discovery of this decade has been a hitherto unplumbed, forbidden, inexpressible depth of female rage. Robin Morgan—one of the most honestly angry women since Antigone—has rightly become a feminist heroine for her expression of it. Among the themes of her first book of poems, *Monster*, were the connections between personal suffering and politics, her craving for a woman's revolution, her hatred of revolution's enemies, her sense of incipient madness.

If *Monster* comprised Morgan's season in hell, *Lady of the Beasts* is a purgatory. This volume explores what can happen, emotionally, when pain and anger, fully acknowledged and stated without inhibition, exhaust themselves. "I told my wrath, my wrath did end," an earlier poet has promised. Many feminists may dislike what happens, because *Lady of the Beasts* essentially celebrates love—the dominion of

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love in a kingdom of despair, generated by the difficult achievement of a hub of self-love. Self-love differs from self-pity, and the poet's furious victim mask begins to fade. "I am just a woman, thirty-three years old,/trying to be useful, focussing on struggle," she still says. But the explicitly political consciousness of Morgan's work plays a comparatively minor role now, since descent into self has brought her to the sea floor where autobiography meets mythology. Not Marx or Freud, but Jung, Graves, and Erich Neumann's *The Great Mother*, give light here.

Of three important multi-poem sequences, the first, "Easter Island," defends Morgan's thirteen-year-old marriage to Kenneth Pitchford against those "who thirst for the bracing poems of hate," depicting herself and him as volcanic monoliths, impermeable to critique. "The Network of the Imaginary Mother" explores relationships with the poet's mother, whose dying flesh teaches through repulsion:

> the infection of being alive,
> which I shall never again disclaim,

her husband:

> I who hate the class of men have loved this man
> for almost half my life. Nothing,
> not even him, will stop me now . . .
> It was the bond of poetry no one could comprehend:
> that what his mind contained appeared to me
> as an interior castle, its crystal terraced
> radiant through the body I desired and feared,

then her woman lover, her son, her self. Each poem pursues a myth of self-creation through struggle and transformation, as body-fearing woman becomes embodied goddess: Kali in the three phases of virgin, mother, and crone; Isis with Osiris; Demeter and Kore; African and Aztec madonnas, who heal, nurture, actively guide and initiate in love.

"Voices from Six Tapestries" interprets the fifteenth-century *Lady with the Unicorn* tapestries, which hang in the Musée de Cluny in Paris, as the expression of a woman-centered pre-Christian religious system. It is also a moving, sustained love poem. The Lady and her ministers invoke "my one desire"—union of spirit and flesh, male and female, human and animal creature—and the poignance of yearning resembles not so much other poems, as works of dance like "Swan

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Lake" or "Firebird." Yet one should notice that the Lady defines her Unicorn finally as a sacrificial symbol, although the depiction of its sacrifice occurs in *Hunt of the Unicorn,* the set of tapestries exhibited in the Cloisters collection of the Metropolitan Museum, and does not occur within the calm of the Cluny work. "I would," says the Lady, "have spared us all from this, if it were possible"—but the Unicorn will meet death at the hands of a mob, and resurrection only in Art.

The fated death of the beloved is, so to speak, the bottom line of a woman-centered system, but then, it has always been the bottom line of male-centered systems: recall, as a well-known twentieth-century instance, how Hemingway kills Catherine off in childbirth at the end of *Farewell to Arms,* letting ex-Tenente Henry walk away bravely, stoically, into the rain. The truth must surely be that both sexes dream the fatality of the other (as parents do of children, children of parents), that artists need to articulate such fantasies, and that no healing, of either individual wounds or of the pain which divides the sexes, can take place without development of a deeper consciousness than most of us now possess. Women desire power, as men do. Women imagine the deaths of those they most love, who most bind them, as men do. The poet, trying to be useful, says so.

Now the rub. Morgan writes most successfully in a middle style, close to common speech. "Loyalty Oath," which pictures the poet's subselves as a troop of illiterate protesting picketers she guiltily tries to pacify, makes fine comedy in this mode. "The City of God," where the poet is seeking salvation while surrounded by whores and pimps in the street, cockroaches in the apartment, combines comedy and strong rhetoric. Several other poems work well on this same level.

But when she moves to the lyric and the vatic, her skills look limp. The loose free verse she uses in her major poems has no shape or power of its own, nor does the language compel interest past its surface content. Lines like "There is a place beyond our struggle/where I will take us—/beyond the archetypal . . ." sound embarrassingly like the close of *West Side Story* star-crossed by C. G. Jung. Pieces of colloquial phrasing go innocently to bed with pieces of pseudo-Biblical. I do not quarrel with Morgan's seriousness, her sense of the issues, or her conviction that poetry can make things happen. I have been touched and changed by her work, and presume that other contemporary women, and men, will be so also. But "Time"—to return to Auden—"is intolerant/Of the brave and innocent." To make ideas or ideals survive for longer than a season or two, a writer needs not only the life so short, but also the craft so long to learn.

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Luckily, at a distance from these battlements, lives the poetry which does not make us choose between dehydration and the flood, but charms and consoles as poetry has always done, gracing our limitations and triumphs by the teller's skill. Much of this work gets published by America's "uncommercial" small presses, which can afford to print what is excellent though unfashionable; Felix Pollak's *Ginkgo* is an outstanding example.

Pollak has for several decades now carried on a bemused love affair with our language, although—being Austrian born and educated—he does not insist on bigger, stronger, greater, further. His new *Ginkgo,* beautifully produced by The Elizabeth Press, opens with a cheery *memento mori* poem. Pollak goes to work each morning past a cemetery corner where a gravestone, rain or shine, says MOHL:

I pass
and I greet him
Hi MOHL old boy
sum quod eras ero quod es but he
never answers except for saying MOHL
by which he perpetuates himself
and which suffices for our communication for while we
may not have spoken the same language before
we are
now
in perfect cahoots
although alas
we again won't be alas
some time in the future alas
which alas is a pity
but alas alas inevitable . . .

The "funny melancholy" sensibility notices, on a grimy abandoned store window:

there is a lot of loving going on:
Sue loves Bill, an arrow through her heart,
and Pat loves Dick, and John loves Mary Jane.
Some jilted or jaded Romeo has added his
Fuckyouall above a swastika, but is outdone
by a joyous boast—I KISSED VERONICA!

Mortality is a major theme of *Ginkgo,* along with love found and lost, remembrances of things past in Vienna and elsewhere, quick takes on

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the ironies of history, the literary life, academic critics, and God (who in an off moment tells divinity students "Publish, or/no parish"). The touch stays light, the tone silvery, the wisdom distilled. Some bits from a poem called "Entries":

> Two grasshoppers clinging to
> a cold wall
> in the autumn sun:
> two old ladies
> in a Home for the Aged.
>
> Observe the small cloud
> my breath makes on the mirror:
> cloudy . . . cloudy . . . clear.
>
> The error corrected.
> But the eraser dust
> clogging my typewriter.
>
> Dusk. The dog in front
> of the house slowly
> becomes a bush.

Art to conceal art, intelligence to gratify rather than bulldoze the gentle reader, an ability to take pleasure in the pleasurable, a recognition that many things in life do not change very much in spite of our wishes—these are, of course, old-fashioned humanist virtues in a poet. They create a peaceful space around the poem, and within the reader, which more strenuous work may fail to do. For better or worse, Pollak does not approach the radical soul searching of someone like Morgan, but resigns himself to the belief that love consists of "the hurt never/diluted or dispersed . . . the unbridgeable/one-way distances." Where he intersects with someone like Ammons, it is to explain through image rather than abstraction, as in the lines from an earlier book, *The Castle and the Flaw:*

> All things are candles, even stones, although
> we burn too hot to fathom their cool rays.

Pollak's title poem, describing a ten-million-year-old "living fossil," a sacred tree which is still halfway fern, remarks that

> It knew Homer and Ptolemy, Michelangelo and Shakespeare,
> and Goethe wrote one of his minor poems about it,
> comparing its clefted leaf with the duality (ach!) of

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his soul. (My grandmother pressed a gingko leaf
between the appropriate pages of his *Gesammelte Werke*). . . .

Look closely at this leaf: Lao-tzu's eyes
must have rested upon its identical twin, Alexander's troops
(joking ribald at the sexual smells of their far-away women)
must have smelled that fruity stench and eaten those oval pits.

Ginkgo biloba: found "missing link between flowering plants
and ferns": survival is the ultimate virtue.

Ginkgo will be as good to read in ten or twenty years as it is today. Certain continuities remain. It seems particularly appropriate in the context of Pollak's work to remember Goethe's civilized opinion: "One ought, every day at least, to hear a little song, read a good poem, see a fine picture, and, if it were possible, to speak a few reasonable words."

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